The Ultimate Lucid Dreamer's Manual: From Basics to Beyond

By Marc VanDeKeere

"There is light in every darkness
for those who open their eyes at night."

Are you dreaming?????

Are yuo dreaming?????

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Are you dreaming?????

Our you draeming?????

Arr yuo dereming?????

Are you dreaming?????

Are you dreaming?????

Are yuo dreaming?????

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Table of Contents:

I. INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND APPROACH OF BOOK
II. LUCID DREAM POSSIBILITIES AND POTENTIALS
III. "REALITY", BELIEF SYSTEMS, AND DREAMS
IV. SUMMARY OF DREAMS
V. SUMMARY OF DREAM APPROACHES
VI. SUMMARY OF LUCID DREAMS
VII. PREPARATION AND BASIC SKILLS FOR LUCID DREAMING
VIII. BEGINNING TIPS, TROUBLESHOOTING AND TOOLS
IX. ADVANCED LUCID DREAMING METHODS AND TECHNIQUES
X. BEYOND ADVANCED LEVEL TECHNIQUES
XI. WAKING WORLD APPLICATIONS: LUCID WAKING
XII. SUPPORT GROUPS
XIII. RECOMMENDED READING

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PART I

I. INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had a flying dream where you ecstatically soared through the air over breathtaking views as the wind raced warmly against your face? Have you ever dreamed you were swimming with friends on a beautiful tropical island? Imagine your favorite dream. Did you enjoy the experience any less because it was a dream? Even though it was a dream, the experience itself was still amazingly fulfilling.

Now, imagine if you had known that you were dreaming while you were dreaming. Imagine the thrill of being totally aware and fully conscious while dreaming and capable of experiencing anything that your heart desires. The ability to maintain full awareness while dreaming is most commonly referred to as

lucid dreaming, and this manual will provide you with all the tools that you will need to develop this natural ability. Before delving into the topic it would be a great idea to contemplate all the benefits and possibilities that lucid dreaming has to offer.

If you could experience anything in this lifetime what would it be? Would you like to expand your perceptual horizons? Would you like to enhance and harness your creativity? Would you be interested in developing your problem solving abilities? What if you could learn to incubate specific dreams and consciously maneuver through them? What if you could visit friends who live on the other side of the country or even contact relatives or loved ones who are literally "on the other side" without leaving your bedroom? What if there was a way to learn how to make all of your fantasies come true? Would you like to safely satisfy your every desire? Does the tip of this perceptual iceberg sound appealing to you? All this and much more are possible once you learn to develop your lucid dreaming abilities.

By interacting and intently guiding and interacting within a conscious dream, you can literally live out your wildest dreams. Being able to dream consciously may be the most exhilarating and rewarding ability that we as humans possess. Being asleep yet mentally awake and fully aware may sound like a paradox, but it is totally possible. In fact, it is a skill that can be learned by just about anyone including yourself. In this manual we will cover all of the insights, pointers and techniques that you will need to cultivate your innate lucid dreaming ability. After learning how to become lucid in your dreams, you will encounter a whole new gamut of obstacles ranging from the necessity of maintaining your lucidity to the necessity of being able to exercise a certain degree of control over your dreamscape. After dealing with the basics, we will discuss some of the more advanced concepts and methods that will allow you to masterfully maneuver through your lucid dreams.

This manual is a journey of self-discovery and self-empowerment. The path begins with you and within you. Throughout your journey you will not only learn how to dream lucidly but you gain a better understanding of yourself along the way. Your travels will be influenced by all the factors that affect you in your waking life so by developing your dreaming side you will be cultivating a better waking self as well.

As remarkable as lucid dreaming is, it is surprisingly overlooked and undeveloped by most people, but the times as always are changing. The lucid dreaming movement is gaining momentum. Once you learn how to do it, you will cultivate such a contagious exhilaration that you will be compelled to share it with anyone who will listen. I have never met anyone who has had lucid dreams and not expressed a deeply felt desire to have more. With such marvelous experiences available to us every night when we would otherwise be doing nothing but sleeping it is guaranteed to have a profoundly positive impact on your life. I project that at the current rate at which it is spreading that it will become a household word within a decade or so and it will become incorporated into our culture in about two decades or so. It is that phenomenal.

I have personally been watching the spread of lucid dreaming related web sites on the Internet. This increase is a good indicator that it is gaining momentum. Within the last few years, the number of lucid dream related information and web sites has been increasing exponentially. Later on, we'll discuss the enormous resources now available to lucid dreamers on the Internet. There is a whole virtual community of lucid dreamers who are all working together to help each other learn more about this rapidly growing field. Why the growing interest? It only makes sense if you ask yourself this question: Who wouldn't want to learn how to be able to experience anything that your heart desires?

Lucid dreaming is an ability that allows us to transcend the shackles of reality. We can fly effortlessly through the sky like a bird or we can live out any other fantasy in a fully interactive world where we have heightened senses of touch, sight, smell, hearing, and taste. It allows us to get in touch with ourselves. If you have any problems or issues that you need to deal with it is the ultimate realm to find these answers. When you are in a lucid dream state you have a direct channel to your subconscious mind which is infinitely wiser than our narrow-minded conscious mind. This lucid state is a perfect chance to find solutions to any problems or issues that may be affecting you. Instead of relentlessly searching for some external source to help you with your problems, you can use lucid dreaming as a way to find these solutions from within you. You can depend more on yourself when it comes to matters that affect your life, your happiness and your overall state of well being. The benefits of lucid dreaming can allow us to maximize our limited time here on the planet, and they lead us to understand what is truly important in life-"Experience".

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." -Confucius. Everything we do is experience. Every thought and every feeling is all part of our experiential memory bank. We learn through experience. We feel love and joy by experiencing it. Whether we are experiencing a dream or whether we are experiencing whatever "reality", we are experiencing nonetheless. Our waking world is filled with precious golden nuggets of experience, but the treasures to be found within our dreams may be more comparable to glorious mountains of platinum. If there was a way to transcend reality, a way to get to know ourselves from the inside out, a way to get more out of our lives by increasing our access to experience, wouldn't it be in all of our best interests to do whatever was required to learn how to reap these benefits?

I will try to keep this manual as free from unnecessary dogma as I can, but being subjective is often hard to avoid. I don't want to alienate anyone by incorporating some of the conclusions I have drawn as to how these things work and why. For now, I'm concentrating on the basics of learning how to have lucid dreams and after we have established the basic "how-to's" then we will move beyond into the advanced realm where we will focus on making the most of your lucid dreams. Along our journey there will be numerous stops that may require having an open mind so keep in mind that a learning mind needs to be an open mind. If you let your mind go, you might be surprised with what it brings back to you.

Aside from the necessary mentioning of some notable thinkers, I will try to limit my interspersed beliefs to what I refer to as my knowns. The difference between one's "knowns" and one's beliefs is often misunderstood. Your beliefs may include things that you have never experienced, but for these beliefs to become knowns you must experience it for yourself. My knowns are things that I have come to know through first-hand experience. Your knowns may be different from mine because everyone has different lives and different experiences that will determine what they "believe" and what they "know". To make things even more complicated, your knowns are always expanding and becoming less limiting if you are wise enough to allow them the necessary room for growth. The goal is to move to higher and higher plateaus of knowns. These successively higher levels of knowns, these expanding "truths", become less limiting and less restrictive as they continually transcend themselves.

One of my knowns would be that the more you know, the more you realize that there is to know. So paradoxically, the more you know is the more that you know you don't know, you know? The phrase, "Beware of the man of one book," alludes to the pitfall of stagnating growth. If anyone tells you that they know the "one way" and if he/she refuses to listen to other angles, this is a sure indicator that this person may actually believe very much that he/she knows, but that does not imply that their "way" is the best. In

fact, I would be weary of anyone who is so firmly set in their ways.

Most of my belief systems and my personal views will be streamlined for the sake of objectivity, but as they inevitably pop up along the way, please keep in mind that everyone has their own views. My beliefs just happen to be the most effective way for me to interpret my experiences. Whenever I do start going "off-topic" there is usually a point to be made which will shed light upon the rigid shackles that our belief systems have placed upon our awareness and upon our perceptual abilities. Your life is what you make it and I do not intend to impose my views upon you, but you can expect to have your beliefs called into question if they are limiting your perspective and constraining your progress.

In the words of Kahlil Gibran, "If he is wise indeed, he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind". These wise and eloquent words point out that any learning needs to take place inside your own mind. I will attempt to lead you to the door, but you must be the one to open it. You are the supreme source and the ultimate creator of your own dreams. You are the determining factor in both your dreaming and waking "realities". Everything ultimately boils down to your experiences, your interpretations and your belief systems. As you become more in touch with your current belief systems you may realize that they are not only limiting your dreaming world but they are also affecting your waking "reality" as well. We will go over this in greater detail when we discuss belief systems in the next section.

Along your journey I will attempt to allow you to be your own judge and to let your experiences speak for themselves. You can consider me as your dream guide providing you with all the tools and support that you will need to learn how to lucid dream, but the application and interpretation of these experiences are entirely up to you. As your dream guide I will be with you at each step answering questions that may arise and offering any needed insights. Along the way we will cover all the basics needed to speed up your progress, but as mentioned the actual progress in the end will come down to you. All it really takes is a strong desire to learn and a dedicated commitment to follow through with your intentions. Once you make the commitment to yourself to follow the guidelines in this manual, you are guaranteed to succeed as long as you never stop trying.

According to the statistics, if you follow the outline and do what is recommended you will most likely have a lucid dream within a month or so. Like any other skill, there will be some people that catch on more quickly and others who may take a little longer, but you should not be discouraged or overly concerned about the time frame of your progress. You have the rest of your life to continually better yourself. Have patience and determination. This is not an ability that you will learn overnight. It does take discipline to follow the steps, and you may need to rearrange your lifestyle a little in order to maximize your results, but I can guarantee that your time spent developing your lucid dreaming ability will be the best investment of your life.

I refer to lucid dreaming as a natural ability because anyone can do it. It is not some special gift that only a few extraordinary individuals possess. It is a natural potential that we all have that just needs to be developed like any other skill. It is not even as difficult as learning to play a musical instrument or learning a foreign language because we are all born with the innate ability to dream. We are all predisposed to dreaming. It is a natural part of our biological constitution, but like any other skill it does take discipline and it does take practice. It may even take rearranging and unshackling not only your lifestyle but more importantly some of your thinking patterns that at this point are limiting remnants from a past period when they were useful, but now they may be inhibiting your progress.

Mark Twain made an excellent point by saying, "I do not wish to hear about the moon from someone who has not been there". As your guide I can assure you that I am a highly experienced lucid dreamer. Having had literally hundreds upon hundreds of lucid dreams, I have a strong working knowledge of the dream realm and I am always expanding my knowledge of the realm. The contents of this manual are the most effective and the most successful methods that I have found.

How do I know? Because I've tried all of them and I know that they work because I have personally experienced them. I have read book after book on the subject of lucid dreaming and have experimented with the methods outlined in all of them. Some methods have helped a little and some have helped tremendously. By testing these techniques and developing some methods of my own as well as getting feedback from scores of other lucid dreamers, I have compiled all the tricks of the trade that I have found to be useful into this one manual. All of the tips, techniques, and insights that I will be covering should save you months if not years of time if you were to attempt to read all the books and learn it all by trial and error.

I can assure you that I will try to cover all angles and field all related questions that may arise. These methods are sure-fire, tried and tested, the best that I have come across in all my research and they are all personally verified by myself countless times. I reemphasize this because if you wholeheartedly believe that these approaches really work then you will have that much more confidence in them and this confidence will help your progress. Along the same lines, it will be helpful if you realize that all I am telling you is a first-hand account and what I am relaying to you is not speculation or second hand information but it is what I know through my experience. It is important to address the fact that your preconceptions will have everything to do with your progress. We will touch on this concept further when discussing how our belief systems have pronounced effects on what we allow ourselves to experience.

When I first began to develop the ability to lucid dream I wished that there was someone who had answers and pointers for me because all I had were books and my own growing experiential base. Upon reading more and more, learning more and more, and continually testing and refining the techniques, I was amazed at how well I was progressing. What I hope to accomplish with this book is to not only explain how all of this can be done, but also to give you an easy, step by step process which will speed up the process considerably. If I knew back then what I know today and if I were to start all over again, I would have developed much faster. As a token of thanks to all those authors who have helped me get to where I am today, I have compiled this manual as my contribution to the growing field of knowledge about lucid dreaming.

Before we delve into the meal it may be wise to set the mood. The best way to make the most of this manual is to proceed at your own speed. Instead of one overwhelming heaping of information, you may have better results by biting off bits, mentally gnawing on them and thoroughly digesting them before moving on to the next step. The more you thoroughly engrain this material into your awareness, the greater the results will be. As a matter of fact, all of this manual's content should be digested in the same manner. The amount of insight you gain from this manual and your level of success will be significantly increased if you just take your time.

Enthusiasm and excitement are great qualities that will help in our journey but sometimes the zest and craving for instant results will not produce the best results. An unchecked zeal often leads to a quick paced race to get the most out of something. The speed reader will only skim the surface not allowing the

information to take hold before moving to the next level. There is no one in this race but you! As a matter of fact this is not even a race, but if it were, it would be an endurance marathon not a fifty-yard dash so pace yourself so that you will be able to consciously go the distance. If you notice that you have this need for speed along the way just remind yourself that comprehension is the ultimate goal and remember that you literally have the rest of your life to progress.

The ultimate objective is for you to internalize all of this information so that it becomes part of you. Mahatma Gandhi brilliantly summarized this type of inner progress when he said, "We must become the change we want to see". To become this change you will have to do more than just skim the surface.

We need to keep our eyes on what is around us and become more aware of what is happening now as opposed to having our eyes so focused on the horizons that we miss all the important features along the way. The most important part of our journey is on this page right here, right now and tomorrow it will be tomorrow's page. The more comfortable you can become stationing your awareness in the present, the more you will learn and the easier it will be to turn these concepts into actual experience. As James Thurber so eloquently stated, "Let us not look back in anger or forward in fear, but around in awareness." Not surprisingly, being aware and especially being aware that you are aware in the current moment is a necessary skill which we will be relying on to transform our dreams from normal ones into lucid ones.

So on this page right now is the perfect time to start practicing this technique of "grounding your awareness" into the present moment. Like many of the other dream-related techniques that we will discuss, the effects of using this technique will not only help your dreaming abilities but it will vastly improve your awareness and your abilities in your waking world. In dealing with dreams we are dealing with our awareness and since our awareness is present whenever we are present, the process of developing and refining our dreaming awareness will produce a more developed and better-refined waking awareness. As you begin to expand your awareness, you may just realize that you normally spend more waking time in a non-lucid state than you ever would have imagined. With time and practice, your lucid dreaming techniques will spill over into your daily awareness and create a more aware and more lucid waking consciousness.

II. POTENTIALS AND POSSIBILITIES OF LUCID DREAMING

When discussing the possibilities of lucid dreaming, it is hard to summarize all the benefits and applications except for saying, "the sky is the limit", and in some cases the sky can even be surpassed. Anything you can do while awake you can do in a lucid dream. You can go to a tropical paradise, go skiing or skydiving, go on problem solving missions, work on creative exploits, do some soul-searching and much more. There are also many things you can do that you could not do in the waking world. The amazing joy of flight awaits you. Free one-night vacations to Hawaii, Nepal, or even the moon always are enticing. You can even go to that boardroom meeting a day early. You can brainstorm or resolve an issue while having greater access to your sub-conscious mind. Exploring "other-worldly" dreamscapes is an exciting way to pass the night. You can even encounter dream characters who offer marvelous insight and sage-like advice. The possibilities are literally limited only by your imagination.

"The problems of the world cannot be solved by skeptics and cynics whose horizons are limited by the obvious realities. We need men who can dream of things that never were." These words of John F. Kennedy shed light on the need to expand and draw upon our dreaming nature . I believe that if everyone would just take the time to learn how to develop their dreaming lives then the world as we know it would be extraordinarily enhanced. Why? Because the cause of most anger and unhappiness is the fact that people have desires that are not being met. Desires that go unfulfilled create a void in the person causing a variety of negative feelings such as anger, remorse, and even depression. As these desires mount and continue to be unfulfilled, eventually this void becomes more and more combustible until it reaches a critical mass.

Once this level has been reached, it begins to bubble over like a boiling pot. Acts of aggression and hostility, depression and other mental disorders, or even something as simple as being in a bad mood will result from this unfulfilled build-up. Once the critical mass gets to these dangerous levels, it is more likely that people will allow these frustrations to get the best of them, or more accurately, the worst of them. One person is at critical levels so he spends his day being miserable and subconsciously trying to make others miserable. He passes along his frustrations and spreads the dissention until it culminates in a society where we need to attach names to such things as "road rage". These negative repercussions continue to echo their way along one big vicious cycle as they are spread by contact like a rippling wave of discontent. What if people were more aware of their true selves and their true motives? What if they had a safety valve that would release all this negative tension before it builds to critical levels?

If we were driving on our way to work in a society of lucid dreamers, I would guarantee there would be a lot more patience, a lot more smiling, and an abundance of allowing gestures from drivers indicating that it was alright for you to cut in front of them as opposed to our current situation that is characterized by intolerance, dirty looks and disparaging hand gestures usually of the middle finger variety. How can I make such a claim? I used to be one of the uptight restless many that spent most of my driving time being annoyed by this person or that. Now that I have learned to operate at a different level of awareness, I don't allow my thoughts to be swayed by such petty annoyances.

You can use your lucid dreams to discover and overcome your fears. You can find out what makes yourself tick from the inside. You can find out about your innermost desires and thoroughly satisfy your every want. You can use your lucid dreams to heal yourself physically, mentally, and spiritually. You can experience moments of ecstasy and profound feelings of unity with the universe. The choice is entirely up to you. I bet that you have a few wishes that you never thought would come true, but with practice you can create any of your wildest fantasies.

The realm of lucid dreaming is a realm of nearly unlimited potential. It conforms to your wishes. Actually, it **conforms to your intentions and your thoughts in combination with your belief systems**. For example, if you are seeking a dream guide and if you are a Christian, your guide may appear in the form of an angel or a saint. Whereas, a Buddhist may find Buddha himself, and a non-religious person may encounter an elderly wise man. The assistance from each dream guide may be equally helpful to the respective dreamer, but each approach will also be equally based on the respective belief system. Dealing with yourself at such an intimate level allows you to make profound inner-breakthroughs, but let's not get ahead of ourselves. The point of this section is to touch upon the unlimited possibilities that await you in the realm of Lucid Dreaming.

It would be impossible to put in words all that can be done, all that can be felt, and all that can be

experienced in your lucid dreams. So hopefully, having a little taste of what awaits you will whet your appetite for learning. For those of you who might not have the best imagination, now is the time to start developing it. Your lucid dreams provide an ideal playground to interact with imagination. You will find that by developing your dream abilities you will also be developing your overall imagination as well as your levels of concentration, focus and intent.

Here is a list of things you could experience in one of your lucid excursions…

*practice flying

*summon a friend, loved one or famous person

*visit with loved ones who are "on the other side"

*climb a mountain

*go skydiving

*explore the moon or Mars

*go scuba diving

*put your hand through material objects

*walk on the ceiling

*summon a dream guide or a dream teacher

*visit the past or the future

*write a poem, compose a song or create a painting

*communicate directly with your subconscious

*visit a dream healer

Once you start becoming lucid in your dreams, you will become better skilled at prolonging the experience. You will be completely immersed in a thoroughly interactive dream realm as "real" as any waking experience. If you want to use lucid dreaming for spiritual development, for creative excursions, or purely for entertainment purposes that is entirely up to you. We will be focusing upon getting your wings and preparing you for flight. Whatever way you choose to soar on your path is your decision.

Now that we have explored the potential that lucid dreaming has to offer, we need to take a look at some of the underpinnings of the process. There are many underlying factors that play significant roles in

creating and influencing your dreams. Before we jump into the basics of the lucid dreaming, it would be a great idea to cover these factors in order to build a solid foundation for future success. On that note, let's wrap this section up with an insight from Thoreau, "If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."

III. "REALITY", BELIEF SYSTEMS AND DREAMS

In this section I will attempt to walk you through an analysis of your current view of "reality", your belief systems, and also the effects that these concepts and structures have upon your dreaming and waking states. If at first it seems a bit off-topic, please bear with me as it will all come together and help put the rest of the manual into a much broader perspective. "For the voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes." This Zen-like quote cuts to the heart of the matter. If you can keep your eyes and mind open, it will make our journey that much more swift and meaningful.

Before we delve into the meal of lucid dreaming, it may be helpful to set the table, so to speak. It will be extremely advantageous at this time to examine some of the underlying psychological factors that will create and influence your dreams. Your thoughts, beliefs, expectations and preconceptions are several ingredients that affect your dreams. How you view "reality" will also play a significant role. Due to the complexity and depth to which we could delve into one's thoughts and belief systems, we could spend a few hundred pages on that alone, but we will trim the topic down to just the core foundation. For now, the basics should suffice to get us started, and as we move along, this framework will expand as it is applied to each topic that we cover. Hopefully, this unfolding development will allow you to gain a deeper understanding of yourself while maximizing your lucid dreaming progress at the same time.

Dreams are one of this world's greatest paradoxes with lucid dreaming being the ultimate of paradoxes. When you are dreaming you usually aren't aware that you are dreaming so in effect, your dream is your "reality" at the time. You act and react in dreams as if they were real, but at the same time, they are often filled with illogical happenings. It seems that we accept the inconsistencies in a dream because our mental faculties of critical analysis and logical thinking do not usually carry over into the dream realm. They seem to be suppressed or else we all would notice the inconsistencies in our dreams and realize that we are dreaming every night. Due to our diminished analytical ability, we usually do not question what is happening because we are experiencing it, and as far as we are concerned if we are experiencing it then it is real.

Along the same lines, **we have never been taught to think and react in a questioning manner in regards to our "reality". We may react to other people's opinions and to certain ideas in a questioning manner, but when it comes to the nature of our "reality" most people don't consider it something worth questioning**. Reality is something that is taken for granted. It is taught to us from such an early age that we eventually fail to explore our "reality" with the curiosity we once possessed as a child. It appears that Albert Einstein agrees on this point also, "The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one merely tries to comprehend a little bit of this mystery every day." So as we nibble our way through this manual let's remember to keep an open mind to what is possible and what isn't possible. Through our dreams we can access whole new realms of possibilities that may be considered impossible in our waking

world.

Let's look to the roots of where we learned our definitions of "reality" in order to determine what it is that we consider possible or impossible and why we came to these conclusions. In another related quote Albert Einstein went on to say, "It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education". These seem to be very strong words coming from someone who represents our ideal of genius and intellect, but it is a sad but true indictment of our current phase of civilization. Ever since the day we were born we have been slowly but consistently receiving cues as to what is appropriate and what is not. Some things are accepted by our society while others things are de-emphasized or even downright dismissed as being impossible. At an early age we are taught what is make-believe and what is "real", but in the grander scheme of things this results in a process of being "made-to-believe". We are told and taught how to exist in a "reality" that everyone agrees is "real". The fact is that "reality" as it is commonly referred to is a misnomer. The "reality" referred to by most would be better expressed as "consensual reality".

Although I acknowledge a difference between "reality" and consensual reality, I'm not implying that we should stop attempting to differentiate between what is generally agreed to be "real "and what is not. Consensual reality has its time and place, but the problem occurs when these accepted views begin to infringe upon your "reality". I believe that the distinctions between the two are a lot less defined than many people imagine, and as you develop your dreaming abilities you will have the perfect opportunity to experience this first hand in the dream realm

Is an imagined fear any less frightening? Is the subjective experience of a dream any less real than its waking counterpart? In both cases, the experience is determined by the awareness of the beholder. It takes a visionary who can transcend the limits of our consensual reality to describe what is or is not real. I would side with Pablo Picasso when he stated that "everything we can imagine is real". If we can conceptualize it then it exists as a comprehensible thought, and thought is the master building block of each and every one of our versions of "reality". In your dreams a flying blue elephant is as real as the thought that created it. You can see it, hear it and touch it, but as you've learned, flying blue elephants don't exist. Or do they? It seems that our consensual reality comes in conflict with these thought-induced elephants. This discrepancy is one pitfall of our educational process.

The process of socialization that takes place in the name of creating a civilized world has a well-founded initial purpose, but sadly, it outlives its usefulness. To teach children how to operate in our consensual reality is a necessity, to teach them morality and other truths is imperative, but the extent to which we impose our limiting views of "reality" upon these children is downright silly if you ask me. My "reality" is most definitely not your "reality" because you have your own belief systems and your own interpretation of all the events that surround you. Due to the inherent and unavoidable subjective differences associated with the term "reality", it ranks as one of the few words in the English language that should always be surrounded by quotation marks. "Reality" is far too subjective to be pinned down to one definition especially at this point in our development as a species.

For starters, who really knows what "reality" is? Can anyone ever really know its entirety without uncovering more questions along the way? With these two points established, and believe me, I could find a great many more as we will soon discuss, how is it that we pass on all this knowledge about our concrete "reality" as if it were fact? At best our current views are merely workable theories that to this point has been a useful way of making sense of the world around us. We have a fascination and a fixation with having to prove everything in order to accept it as truth. We want to bundle and classify everything

and then place numerical values in order to prove it exists. George Bernard Shaw summed it well when he said, "Crude classifications and false generalizations are the curse of organized life." Even Einstein tossed in his two cents by saying, "As far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain, and as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality." To help us understand how little we truly know about even the very basic foundations of our "reality" at our present state of scientific development, let's take a look at some relatively current developments and discoveries in our sciences.

The entire fact that our "reality" is stable and concrete has been proven to be an illusion. Sure, it may seem stable and concrete, but this is just how we perceive it. In actuality, our "reality" is best described as a complex web of dynamic interconnections. Quantum physics has come through with some remarkably eye-opening discoveries. Most importantly, it has been established that our relentless scientific addiction to reductionism has been an excursion in futility as illustrated by the beautifully ironic presence of wave-particle duality to the equally profound "observer effect" and "uncertainty principle" to groundbreaking data that supports the non-locality of time/space. *Layman's translation*: We are beginning to realize that the more we know the less we actually know. By the end of this section hopefully you will become familiar with all of this seemingly technical jargon. The bottom line is this: The scientific search for the Holy Grail, the quest to find the ultimate building block of matter, has brought about some remarkably eye-opening discoveries.

For a long time, the quest was to reduce nature to the one ultimate building block that could be quantified and analyzed in attempts to finally figure out nature's ancient secrets. As the atom was dissected into particles and then into sub-particles and so on, some amazing phenomena began to unravel. When looking within the atom which is supposedly one of the stable building blocks of nature instead of finding stability, they found constantly swirling, dynamic surprises. Even more surprisingly the deeper they looked the more inconsistencies they uncovered.

First of all, scientists began to realize that the smallest building blocks that they could monitor showed some remarkably unsettling characteristics. It seems that these curious little quanta were both a particle and a wave at the same time. They possess what scientists refer to as wave-particle duality. That means that these tiniest parts of matter were both stable and fluid simultaneously. Impossible, you say. Well, that was probably the first reaction, but test after test confirmed it, and that's nowhere near the end of this monumental "reality" check. These quanta seemed to manifest as either a particle or a wave depending on how you looked at them. If you wanted to see them as a particle you would set up a certain experiment whereas if you wanted to see them in waveform you would have to set up another type of experiment. In effect, they seem to be both, yet their appearance depends on the type of view the observer chooses. This intriguing fact led to the discovery of the "observer effect". The "observer effect" means that the observer plays a direct role in determining what data will be collected based upon his participation in the data collection. The perspective of the observer will directly influence the results. In other words, **what you are looking for often determines what you will find**.

Science has long assumed that our world exists like a separate object that can be prodded and probed and examined as if it were an unconnected external object. With the remarkable discovery of the observer effect, it is now a fact that any involvement will play a role in affecting the overall outcome. Just by looking at something from a certain angle you are engaging it and transforming it according to the parameters of your experiment. In fact, the whole term experiment needs to be revamped because the whole process is better described as participation instead of experimentation. The experimenter is now a participator or an "observer" whose existence needs to be factored into the overall equation and analysis.

Another interesting finding made by physicist Werner Heisenburg is the "uncertainty principle" or indeterminism. It states that if you want to determine the exact location of one of these subatomic particles then you have to give up any hope of knowing its exact speed, and likewise if you want to know its exact speed you cannot determine its exact position. This "uncertainty principle" has been tested and holds true in every trial. If you want to determine the exact speed you need to set up a particular experiment and if you choose to determine the exact location you would need to set up an entirely different approach. You can choose to know one, but by doing so you negate the ability to know the other. Just like the observer effect, it is an either/or situation that leads me to believe that what really matters is how you look at it.

So we've covered wave-particle duality, the observer effect and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, but no pun intended, how does this apply to the matter at hand? It means that the idea of a solid, concrete "reality" is false. Our "reality" may appear to be solid but in actuality it has been proven otherwise. In fact, the only way to discuss the actual fabric of "reality" is to speak in terms of probabilities. In classifying and trying to quantify these curious little quanta, scientists now converse in what may sound like a language based on chance. For example, when describing the location of these tiny bits of matter, they now say, "…the odds are a certain percent that this subatomic particle will be found within a certain range, and there is also a certain percent chance that it will not be within that range at all." Very surprising indeed, in a field that is fixated upon exactness to begin using a language of possibilities. Maybe the message for science and for us is that this "reality" of ours is actually a realm of possibilities, an ideal foundation for exploring the impossibly possible.

Is this all starting to fall into place? It means that our consciousness, our awareness, has a direct influence and a proven interconnectedness with our "reality". It means that the "reality" we have been handed is not some end-all, set-in-stone actuality but instead it is just one version that has been useful to this point, but it now appears to be in need of some serious updating. How ironic that the enormously one-sided know-how of science has been brought back to the drawing board by the smallest known things in the universe? Or is it poetic justice?

As if this weren't enough there was yet another discovery that sent shock waves through the scientific community. While observing these subatomic particles, it became apparent that they were somehow either interconnected or capable of communicating over vast distances that defied the current laws of physics. When two related subatomic particles where shot in two different directions the observers noticed that if the direction, speed, or spin of one particle was altered it would affect the corresponding characteristic of the other particle. Despite the vast distances that separated them, these particles still seem to be interconnected. They exhibit characteristics that contradict some of the most basic of scientific fundamentals like the "fact" that nothing can move faster than the speed of light. If in fact nothing can travel faster than the speed of light then it would be impossible given the distance between these particles for them to have this instantaneously synchronized behavior. This perplexing discovery is known as the EPR Paradox and was theorized by Albert Einstein, Boris Podolsky, and Nathan Rosen in 1935. As is often the case, it took the development of more advanced technology to prove this paradox. In 1983 a French physicist, Alain Aspect, conducted an experiment which proved this seemingly impossible interconnectedness.

This insight not only exposed a puzzling scientific quagmire but it helped pave the way for a paradigm shift that is still in its infancy. At this point, there is no one conclusive explanation to this dilemma. One thing we know is that our current views of time and space are incomplete. It is possible that our views of

a solid, stable structure known as space may fall far short of the mark. The actual nature of the time/space continuum may be exceedingly more complex containing potential for interconnections that we have no knowledge of at this present time.

Just as we once so ignorantly clung to the belief that our world was flat, we are now in the infancy of a new paradigm shift that will eventually result in the rewriting our views of "reality". Joseph Chilton Pearce who has written extensively on paradigm shifts makes a good point when he says, "We are shaped by each other. We adjust not to the reality of the world, but to the reality of other thinkers." These amazing scientific discoveries are forcing today's most innovative thinkers to rethink our views on the nature of "reality". How can we describe the interconnectedness of these subatomic particles which violate (or "transcend" may be the more appropriate word) our current scientific facts and expand our current theories of "reality"?

The theory that best explains this phenomenon is aptly and paradoxically referred to as the non-locality of time/space. It proposes that our whole view of linear time and space is actually an illusion which brings us back to Einstein saying, "Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a persistent one". The findings now indicate that our linear, bounded world is far more multi-dimensional in nature. There will undoubtedly be some very important discoveries in the future that will add more to our growing knowledge on the topic.

To better describe our current views on "reality" and the underlying cause of this thinking, let's start by examining two different points of view. The way that most people commonly view "reality" is linear. Linear thinking is governed by the rules of cause and effect. We are addicted to an "X causes Y and Y causes Z" type of mentality. This type of thinking helps us draw conclusions about our world and it helps us develop a highly functional approach to understanding our physical universe, but as you will see it does have it's drawbacks when it comes to accessing and expanding into new realms of thought.

Now, imagine that you have a piece of paper. Let's draw a line on it and this will be used as an example of how we linearly perceive our "reality". We can look at this as if it were a time-line. I'm sure you remember studying time-lines during your school days. Every point to the left takes place before any point to the right. Every cause would be to the left of every result it causes to the right. Just as the words on this page flow forward, they connect each other into a sentence that leads to the next, and hopefully, has a coherent connection as it sets up the path to the next point. When we want to recall something or make sense of something we will be drawing on experiences, memories, and things that we have learned from the past. In effect, we actually are always on the end of the line as it extends into the future with each passing moment.

Now, take something that doesn't follow this pattern like intuition. Intuition appears to be a hunch or a feeling about what will happen or how one should act which is based more on impulses in either the present or even the future as opposed to being based in the past. If it were based in the past it would merely be a form of reasoning not intuition. So based on the rules of our time-line, this violates our linear thinking and in turn as a linear thinking society we have de-emphasized the importance of intuition.

Now, lets' apply this to our material world, to get from point A to point B you must travel the distance, starting at A and ending at B. As far as traveling, communicating, and just about any other action will always flow from the left of the line to the right. If it doesn't act in this manner then it is illogical or more likely it is considered impossible. But the previous example of subatomic particles being interconnected somehow at vast distances is a direct violation of the time-line. It cannot happen according to this model,

but it does. It is theoretically impossible, but in actuality it is a fact.

How does this happen? How can we explain this discrepancy? To clarify this we must look for an entirely new approach since our linear thinking has failed. There are other ways to view "reality" which are not linearly based. A nonlinear view is much harder to describe since we have been raised for so long with our linear thinking that it has almost become hard-wired into the mental circuitry of our thought processes and has become embedded into our belief systems. Linear thinking like socialization has its advantages and its purpose, but it also drawbacks as we will see in this next nonlinear thought exercise.

On the same mental paper, right below the linear timeline, imagine drawing a small circle with a dot in the middle. This is the new nonlinear model of thinking. Now, imagine that you are the dot in the center of the circle, and the surrounding points on the circle represent all of your experiences. In this case, you are the center and everything else exists as surrounding, equidistant points. The distance between you and your birthday is the same as the distance between you and yesterday. Every experience, every thought, absolutely everything is equally far or equally near when "observing" from the center of this circle. All points on this non-linear model are equidistant in both space and time because you could access any experiences equally.

It is also nonlinear so there is no apparent cause and effect, it just IS. Imagine looking out from the inside of the circle. Even if you were to imagine all of the points on this circle as being all of your experiences arranged sequentially, it would be impossible to view multiple points on the circle in terms of causation. No matter which direction you look, everything is equally accessible. There could be no X causes Y reasoning because there is no chronological timeline of events. You would have no linear frame of reference as a basis for making any causal ties. This mental exercise is not intended to prove or disprove anything. It is merely an example of how your perspective can change if you allow yourself to explore new modes of thought. Linear and nonlinear thought both play crucial roles in processing information in our waking and dreaming worlds.

Now that you've conceptualized the framework of this new model, what are its advantages? Our consciousness is the ultimate factor that determines our "reality". It is much easier to understand how our consciousness works by using this nonlinear model because it is closer to how our consciousness functions. This nonlinear model is obviously a simplified version, but in light of how our mind operates, it is not that hard to see how one could benefit by being a nonlinear thinker. By thinking nonlinearly you can increase your processing speed by having better access to all the informational points.

Once you acknowledge and practice your nonlinear thinking you will be strengthening the interconnectedness and overall performance of your brain. Your brain operates much like the muscles in your body. The more you use it, the more it will grow. Literally, you will be building new neural networks within your brain as well as strengthening already existing ones. This increase in neural networking produces faster and more efficient thinking. All thoughts exist as a conglomerate of electrical pulses that race along these neural networks, and if there are more networks then there is more efficient thought. Better recall and quicker processing speed are two direct benefits.

Imagine a congested city that only has a few major roads. By increasing the number and quality of the roads, a city would improve its ability to travel, trade and transport within its city limits. Just like this city, your brain counts on its neural networks to relay information, and with more pathways and more interconnections your brain can work more efficiently. All this development strengthens the brain and in turn expands the mind and produces a more maneuverable consciousness.

Now, to get a better view of how our subconscious as whole operates, let's expand our nonlinear model a little further. This next step may require you to stretch your conceptual skills and that is always a good thing to exercise. Imagine this circle again, but now imagine that each point on the circle is also another circle that has all of its corresponding points being equidistant to itself and yet this point's circle is still interrelated to the original circle. Now that we have this more developed model, it is much easier to see how our thoughts are linking and flowing at subconscious levels. All the points are circles in themselves so by activating one point you in effect have access to an infinite set of new points.

Here is an example of how this process may work. Someone mentions the word red, and you activate the storage point on your circle of experience that is labeled red. This opens access to the red zone and you may then link to apple which has its own circle as well. From apple, you could flow on to tree or any other associations that are accessible from each zone. The possibilities are obviously infinite for at each point there are nearly infinite potentials. For example, when you were in the red zone you could just have easily thought about a stop sign or a rose, and these choices would have opened a whole new pathway. This seems to be the most effective way of explaining how and why our memories are stored as informational objects which can be accessed by literally activating them into existence by placing our awareness upon them. It closely parallels the old Chinese saying, "**Energy flows where attention goes**." In fact, this process has been increasingly viewed as a means to develop new supercomputers which are capable of greatly increased processing abilities as well as being a model for new approaches in creating computers with artificial intelligence capabilities.

This helps explain why are dreams are often so illogical at times because when we sleep we deactivate certain critical regions of our brain that normally override the presence of nonlinear thinking. Having decreased our linear thinking, our nocturnal adventures are a haven of nonlinearity. We have thoughts that seem to evolve and freely associate from one linked thought to the next. Without the dominance of logic and linear thinking holding the reigns as is normally the case during our waking state, we can wind up jumping between seemingly unrelated thoughts that may rhyme, or be verbal puns, resulting in haphazard jumps from one dream scene to the next one. Although it may seem chaotic, it is actually quite logical if viewed from the nonlinear approach. There I go, trying to make sense of it all. As a matter of fact, during our waking state we are always trying to make sense of everything and fit it into a linear mold. This is because we are products of a linear thinking society.

Try as we may, we have been instilled with a tendency to doubt and disbelieve that which does not conform to our linear thought. As functional as our beliefs and even our facts may seem, they may prevent true progress when we adhere to them too rigidly. New and provocative thoughts must withstand the battering of deeply entrenched beliefs that in some cases have been proven to be absolutely inaccurate. Since we have been talking about science, think of all the examples of monumental discoveries that were not accepted because they did not conform to the beliefs at the time. Jean-Jacques Rousseau mentioned that "Nature never deceives us; it is we that deceive ourselves." The world being flat, the world being the center of the universe, and now, the world being solid and stable. These are all perfect examples of how easily we convince ourselves that we know something when in fact we are only beginning to know.

If I were to bet on any one thing it would be that our current understanding of "reality" is still in its infancy phase. It is almost a certainty that some new discovery will come along and shift our whole perspective on "reality". "Nothing endures but change" said Heraclitus, an ancient philosopher centuries ahead of his time. If history repeats itself as it so often does, those who perceive coming changes as a

threat to their comfort zones will adamantly oppose the discoveries that will bring about our next impending change. We all have set up a perceptual comfort zone that is highly influenced by our belief systems. This comfort zone is both created and protected by our belief systems. Much in the same way that we enjoy being home after a strenuous day at work, we also have a comfortable mental respite to retreat to whenever our beliefs are threatened.

"A scholar who cherishes his comfort zone is not fit to be deemed a scholar," said the wise man, Lao Tsu. If you think you don't have a comfort zone, think again. We all have our comfort zones as surely as we all eat, sleep and breathe. Perhaps it is a universal human phenomenon like fear of the dark or fear of the unknown. It is a direct response to our not wanting to be fearful and wanting to have a sense of security and stability during times of stress. We want to be safe physically but we also strive to be safe both mentally and emotionally. When we are faced with an insurmountable fear or insecurity we try to nullify it by discrediting it with the weapons we store in the arsenal of our comfort zone.

Retreating into our comfort zones may help us to feel secure but always remember that even though a boat is safe in the harbor, boats are not built to remain idly docked on the shore. Overcoming and consistently expanding our comfort zone is one fundamental requirement that we all must face if we are interested in actualizing our true potential. If you do as you have always done, you will be what you have always been so take a good honest look at yourself and your beliefs, and then act accordingly to make a change for the better. In your dreams you will have every opportunity to expand your horizons and your progress may just depend on you expanding your comfort zone in order to chart new territories.

We have covered the mysteriously interconnected nature of our "reality", our need to be questioning, our addiction to linear thinking, the importance of nonlinear approaches, as well as our tendency to remain in our comfort zone, but how does all this relate to the stuff that dreams are made of? It is intimately related and directly applicable. Dreams are made up of thoughts and thoughts are the building blocks of our "reality". All that we are is the result of what we have thought up to this point. You are what you think, literally. We have heard this from as far back as Descartes and beyond. We are the creators of our thoughts so in effect we are the creators of our own "realities".

Someone once said, "The ultimate security is your understanding of reality." If we were to analyze this in light of our knowledge of comfort zones, I would suggest modifying this quote. The ultimate security is in understanding your "reality" and realizing that a sense of security needs to be kept in check in order to prevent stagnation. We do create our own "realities" because it is our outlook on life that creates our experience of "reality". I'm always amused at people who say, "*It made me so mad*!" when in fact no one can make you mad but yourself unless of course you either are not aware of your thought processes or you do not take responsibility for your own thoughts. Aristotle summed it up quite simply by saying, "Happiness depends upon ourselves."

It is a crucial step in one's development when they take responsibility for their own thoughts and stop the incessant blaming of other people and events for their lack of mental and emotional control. In order to make any positive changes in our lives and assume any degree of control over our lives or our dreams or anything for the matter, it is essential to accept the fact that we are the root cause of anything pleasant or unpleasant that we experience. It is our process of interpretive thinking that subjectively labels this event as good and that one as bad. It is our reactions to others and our response to events that create either a pleasurable experience or a painful one. If you have failed a test or failed at getting that new client at work, do you waste your valuable time and energy dwelling in your misery? Or do you realize that you

tried your best, pick yourself up, brush yourself off, and get back in the game? And if you didn't give it your best then what did you expect?

Obviously, if you place your hand in burning water you will feel the pain, but this is inevitable unless of course you have some phenomenal control over your mind and body. In fact, there are many people who have such inconceivable control over their minds. For example, some martial arts masters or yogis can perform feats that would injure any average person like breaking bricks with their hands, withstanding punishing blows, piercing their bodies and even pouring molten iron on their tongues. To make matters even more unbelievable there is absolutely no physical damage caused to these masters after these feats are performed. I wouldn't believe it if I had not witnessed it myself on television.

Obviously, if you or I placed our hands in boiling water we would get burned, but they do not. Could it be that they have such a firm control over their beliefs and thoughts that they actually bypass the body's natural response systems? By not allowing their body to process the pain and the injury itself, somehow the pain and injury never occurs as if pain and injury were merely byproducts of our mind. If this is the case then we are far more responsible for our own pain and suffering than we currently allow ourselves to believe. This concept is in keeping with everything we have discussed thus far, and when you think about it open-mindedly it seems to be the only logical explanation. This is a highly unlikely example since most humans have not developed such mastery levels of mind control, but there are some related tie-ins that can be applied to the average everyday person.

If an average person placed a hand in boiling water, the sensation of pain and a resulting burn would normally follow. The lasting effect that is not inevitable is how you care to react. How do you choose to react to this situation? Are you going to yell and scream? Will you be in a bad mood for the rest of the day? Will you tell everyone how this happened and how you can't believe someone left boiling water on the stove? Or will you accept it and move on without wasting your energy on such self-indulgent behavior? Take responsibility for all your actions including all your thoughts and your reactions, and realize that life is what you make it. "Any fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius-and a lot of courage-to move in the opposite direction," commented E.F. Schumacher. In other words, follow your reactions and your interpretations to their ultimate source, you, and your relationship to the world around you.

Once you develop your awareness, you will monitor your thoughts, actions, and reactions in order to take a more active role in your life. Imagine if we could transform all the time that we spend blaming others and making excuses and convert it into positive action and insightful introspection. As we go through the educational system we are told what we "should know", but we are never really taught how to think. We are taught to act responsibly but we are never really taught how to think responsibly. Not teaching our children to think responsibly is one major reason why we have so much confusion in this world.

Something as important as thought and it is never mentioned until we are old enough to take psychology classes. It is as foolish as sending fleets of students through medical school without teaching them how to deal with death, yet until recently this too was the case. There may be a stigma attached to teaching people how to think in a culture that prides itself on individuality. When you consider the fact that your mind is the one place where you should be allowed to have free reign, it is not so surprising that people aren't that interested in being told "how" they should be thinking. The sad fact though is that this fear of having one's ultimate inner space violated prevents most people from actively developing a healthy mental life. The grips of consensual reality often creates people who consciously, or more likely than not,

unwittingly adopt a consumer driven mindset.

Having few options from which to choose, the typical thought processes usually become programmed to want "things", and once these things are attained there is the desire to have more and more of them. This consumerism spurs the economy and is a boom for those looking to make money to buy more things, but in the grander scheme, it results in a culture plagued with separatism, violence, mental illnesses and other stress-related maladies. The status quo is maintained at the expense of our societal wellbeing. If we could harness the daily amount of negative thoughts that are scattered around our country by its citizens and transform it into electricity, we could probably power the whole world for the day. It is this kind of wasted time and energy that could have been avoided if society were taught how to think more holistically and more responsibly.

Aside from taking responsibility for your thoughts and being aware of your thought patterns in order to correct them when they stray, continually examining and testing your belief systems helps prevent stagnation and allows you to transcend where you may have remained shackled had you left your belief systems unchecked. Belief systems are basically mental structures that help us make some rational sense out of a seemingly irrational world. They help our awareness filter all the stimuli in our surroundings and in turn they help us interpret our experiences, and to a large extent, they help determine what we will actually experience.

Just as with the observer effect, our perspective is based upon our belief systems and both will affect our experience. Emerson sums it up concisely by saying, "*People only see what they are prepared to see*." If you do not believe something will occur the odds are you would be less likely to notice it even if it occurred right under your nose. A good example of this occurs whenever you learn a new word and then see or hear this new word several times within next few days or weeks. It is not that this word suddenly came into existence, but rather it suddenly came into your awareness. It existed the whole time but you unconsciously overlooked it. I know at first glance that it may sound inconceivable that some underlying mechanism is screening your surroundings and allowing you to experience certain things while keeping you oblivious to other things, but upon further examination it is simply the easiest way to describe how you can function at all. With all the external stimuli that surrounds you at every moment, it only makes sense that there needs to be some kind of filtering system. Imagine a radio that played all channels at the same time. The broadcast from this unfiltered radio would be as impossible to understand as trying to interpret our physical world without some form of a fine-tuning system. In "reality" this fine-tuning takes place through your awareness, and your belief systems play a crucial part in the direction of your awareness at any given moment.

Another of my favorite quotes that deals directly with beliefs systems is from the brilliant mind of John C. Lilly. He was a pioneering scientist who conducted many ground-breaking experiments with dolphins, explored and mapped his exploits into inner-space, and invented the sensory deprivation tank (or float tank as they are commonly referred to today). He said, "In the province of the mind, what one believes to be true either is true or becomes true within limits to be determined experientially and experimentally, these limits are beliefs to be transcended." This is one of the most profoundly true statements that I have ever encountered, and it should be committed to your memory and acted upon daily. If you don't believe in something, your belief systems will react like a filtering process that alters your awareness so that you are less likely to see or experience things that you don't believe, and more likely to find something that fits in with your present beliefs. Whether you are aware of these beliefs consciously or not, they are guiding your awareness as surely as you are reading this page, right now.

The most obvious example of this filtering process can be found in the world of the eternal pessimist or the eternal optimist. Take the pessimist as an example, I would bet you know someone who is always complaining and always looking at the negative side of things. The reason for this is because they live by the belief that the world is generally a negative place filled with annoying people and unfortunate events. In their little pessimistic worldview, they wear a set of perceptual blinders. If someone they knew won the lottery they wouldn't see it as a blessing instead they would be conditioned to go on a rant about how this person doesn't deserve it or how they'll probably just squander all the money anyway. If they themselves were to win the lottery, they would most likely gripe about the amount they are taxed on their winnings. It becomes an entrenched mental pattern that literally takes over one's thinking processes. Their ability to perceive objectively becomes distorted and their actual mode of perception becomes altered to coincide with their negative expectations. An ill-based mental cycle such as this one creates a self-fulfilling pattern of negativity that will manifest the worst scenario. With the observer effect locked on negative mode, it is nearly impossible to see the light of day.

The power of thoughts and the strength of belief can be directly experimented with while in the dreaming realm. In an atmosphere where thoughts actually manifest into your "reality", you must gain control of your thoughts or suffer the setbacks that your lack of control will produce. In a realm where your beliefs either expand or limit your experience, you may need to overhaul your belief systems in order to gain better control of your dreaming awareness and maximize your experience. While examining your current beliefs and expanding your current comfort zone, you may find that you have your work cut out for you, but the results will definitely outweigh the work.

Once you start working on it in the dream realm, you will find one undeniable truth. Thoughts do have power and can become just as real and just as alive as anything you have encountered in your waking state. What you think consciously and subconsciously will directly affect and create the dreamscapes that you will be exploring. Chaotic and fearful dreams are the results of chaotic, fearful thoughts. The more you become attuned with your dreams, the more you will realize how much impact our daily thoughts really have on both your dreaming and waking consciousness.

You will be delving into a region that is directly governed by thought, feeling and imagination. It may be a dream realm but the experience while you are in it is no less real than your waking "reality". A perfect example of this interaction is the power of flight while dreaming. As you learn various ways to fly around in your dreams, you will notice that the first obstacle will be overcoming the belief that you can't fly. I will cover this more in depth when we discuss flying techniques but the idea is that you will often be grounded and unable to fly merely because you have doubts as to whether you can fly or not. You may even think forcefully, "*I know I can fly, I know I can fly*", but if you possess doubts you may not even be able to make it off the ground. There is a subtle difference between thinking and believing and knowing, and these nuances will be the fine lines you will be exploring as you literally work your way towards getting your wings in the dream realm.

Ivan Pavlov, a master of behavior modification, stated, "…perfect as the wing of a bird may be, it will never enable the bird to fly if unsupported by air." Through your dreamwork you will experience firsthand that your belief systems are analogous to the necessary air that Pavlov mentions. Without an open-minded and highly fluid belief system, your thoughts will lack the support needed to carry you upward and onward to brighter horizons. No matter how strong your intentions if you don't whole-heartedly believe, you are fighting an uphill battle that you cannot win until you modify your beliefs accordingly.

A word to the wise: some things are true whether you believe in them or not, and by not believing in something you are in effect making efforts to prevent yourself from experiencing it. . Someone once stated that, "Reality is that which refuses to go away when I stop believing in it", which at this point should be expanded to include the reverse. The other side of the coin would be saying that certain experiences in our "reality" must be believed beforehand to be experienced. It is not surprising that most skeptics are the first to disbelieve and the last to admit close-mindedness. What great irony that it usually takes an overwhelming amount of other people's experiences to convince the hardcore skeptics who then and only then take their first open-minded attempts at experiencing it themselves.

If anyone chooses to remain self-righteously shackled within a comfort zone, so be it. We each have the right to construct our own "reality' whether it is open-ended or limiting. Let each person be his or her own creator but don't ever be swayed by someone who attempts to limit your beliefs. If someone mentions something beneficial that is empowering and uplifting then by all means, experiment with an open mind and see if you can experience it, but if you encounter people who have nothing to offer but doubt and cynicism, don't be swayed.

One ancient quote still echoes a profound message and will continue to echo throughout the halls of time, "Know Thyself." It is short, sweet and simple, but it holds a perennial truth that should be the basis of any inner or outer development. You should not become stirred by another's skepticism nor should you need to look for comfort in another's approval, find your strength in yourself. Find strength in your beliefs, in your knowns, and in your experience. Hans Margolius put it in these words, "Only in quiet waters do things mirror themselves undistorted. Only in a quiet mind is an adequate perception of the world." He was a wise man indeed.

Skeptics and pessimists are common obstacles that you will encounter on your journey, but they exist only when you give them the time of day. Personally, I find it more productive to help those that are willing to learn instead of wasting time on those skeptics who probably never would believe it even if it were plopped down right in front of their faces. The only way to truly know something is to experience it, and I am not sure if it is a sad thing or if it is poetic justice that the skeptics doubt themselves into never being able to really experience and truly know. In any case, it makes complete sense considering the power of belief systems and how they filter one's experience.

Now that we have covered the ever-important effects that our thoughts and beliefs have over our awareness and the effects that our awareness has upon our ability to perceive our "reality", hopefully you have started reexamining your own personal belief systems. These are such crucial concepts to grasp, but luckily it is inevitable that you will not only be able to think and believe these concepts hold their water, but through your dreamwork you will experience it and get first-hand knowledge. Hopefully by now you have a deep understanding of how intricately interwoven our thoughts, our perceptions, and our "reality" really is. So maybe the next time someone makes some closed-minded comment about "reality", you will be thinking along the same lines as Alan Watts when he said, "But my dear man, reality is only a Rorschach ink-blot, you know".

IV. SUMMARY OF DREAMS

In order to get a workable model of transforming your normal dreams into lucid ones, it may be helpful to give a basic overview of dreams especially for those who have little background knowledge on the

subject. Let's take a brief look at what is currently known about the process of dreaming. In the past few decades, sleep and dream researchers have uncovered a substantial amount of new information about dreaming due mostly to the development and application of new technologies. For example, the electroencephalograph, or EEG, is capable of monitoring changes in the frequencies and patterns of our brainwaves. Our brain produces waves of currents that flow throughout its neural pathways. The type of brainwave is defined by the frequency at which it is pulsing, and the particular rate of pulsation influences our respective state of mind. There are four basic types of brainwave patterns, but due to the complexity of our brains there are often several patterns interacting at one time. It is the predominance of one particular brainwave frequency or one particular pattern of brainwaves that determines our state of mind. For example, if you are in a beta state, there may be trace levels of alpha and theta but they would be minimal compared to the dominating amount of beta present.

Below is a simple chart containing the four types of brainwave frequencies along with their characteristic features and associated mental states. The frequencies are measures in hertz (Hz) which is roughly translated as beats per second or cycles per second. For example, since the Beta brainwave range is between 13 to 30 Hz, a brainwave monitored as pulsing 20 times per second would be considered a beta brainwave. If a brainwave had 6 cycles per second (or 6 pulses per second) it would then fall into the Theta range as outlined below in the chart.

BRAINWAVE: RANGE: CORRESPONDING MENTAL STATE

BETA waves 13 to 30 Hz the fastest waves, most commonly found

during our waking state, associated with

outward awareness, actively perceiving and

evaluating forms of data through the senses;

also present with fear, anger, worry, hunger,

and surprise.

ALPHA waves 7 to 13 Hz associated with non-drowsy but relaxed,

tranquil state of consciousness, pleasant inward awareness, body/mind integration,

present during meditation

THETA waves 3 to 7 Hz associated with increased recall, creativity,

imagery and visualization ,

free-flowing thought, future planning, inspiration, drowsiness, holistic conceptualizing,

present during dreaming and REM states

DELTA waves .1 to 3 Hz associated with deep dreamless sleep, deep

trance state, pituitary release of growth hormone, self-healing,

present during deep levels of sleep,

usually found during non-REM sleep

Using the EEG to monitor subjects while they were sleeping, researchers have learned much about the process of dreaming. For example, it is now common knowledge that dreaming predominantly occurs during a phase of sleep known as the REM period. REM stands for rapid-eye movements which are the characteristic feature when our eyes seem to dart back and forth behind closed eyelids. When a subject was awakened during one of these REM periods, they were able to recall their dreams more easily than if they were awakened from a non-REM period of sleep.

While we sleep we go through a series of sleep stages and a corresponding series of brainwave cycles. There are four stages of Non-REM sleep: Stage One is the onset of light sleep, Stage Two is the continuation of light sleep, Stage Three is the beginning of deeper sleep, and Stage Four is a very deep sleep. After phasing through each of these stages, the sleeping subject then enters a period of REM sleep that is characterized not only by the rapid-eye movement but also by active brainwaves which surprisingly resemble the activity of our brains during a waking state.

This process of cycling through the four stages of non-REM sleep followed by a period of REM sleep is repeated throughout the night. This process is referred to as the sleep cycle. Each sleep cycle is approximately ninety minutes so in one night we go through many sleep cycles with each cycle being ended with progressively longer REM periods. The end of our first sleep cycle may have an REM period of about ten minutes or so, but by the early morning hours, we will be having more and more time spent in the REM state. Our last few sleep cycles have very little non-REM sleep with about an hour of the ninety-minute cycle being spent in REM.

What this means is that the more we sleep the more we dream. Which also explains why we usually remember the dreams we have in the early morning hours because we are dreaming so much more during

these later hours that there is so much more potential for recall. Knowing this natural cycle, we can take the appropriate measures to benefit from it. For example, if you have little dream recall you can set your alarm for earlier than you normally would in order to awaken yourself directly from the REM period. By doing this you will be much more likely to recall your dreams with added clarity. If you are interested in maximizing your dreaming progress, it is these last few hours of sleep that you do not want to cut short.

I also believe that you can consciously extend the amount of REM you experience once you become familiar with the techniques in this manual. I have had many lucid dreams in which I was able to maintain my lucidity for over an hour. The average length of my lucid dreams has been consistently increasing as I better learn to maintain my lucidity. Currently, my lucid dreams can average about forty-five minutes with some lasting longer than an hour's worth of non-stop lucidity, yet some last only a few minutes with varying degrees of lucidity. Some of these lucid excursions have even taken place during my first sleep cycle which according to the earlier findings should not happen, but it did and does. On one recent occasion, I went to bed, became lucid, and then lucidly dreamed for at least an hour. I woke up and checked the clock and verified that it had only been two hours since I had lain down to sleep. The data here as well as information available elsewhere is usually based on the average dreamer, so keep in mind that these guidelines and statistics are best viewed as beliefs to be transcended. Developing your ability to lucid dream will allow you to extend these REM periods and in turn maximize your overall dreaming time.

Given the statistics based on the sleep and dream cycles of an average person, we can expand these statistics to give us a better overview of how much we dream and why it is so important to take advantage of this normally unused time. We all spend and average of about twenty percent of our sleeping time in a dreaming state, and as I've mentioned this percentage can be increased. So even using conservative figures, every person will spend at least six years of their life in dreams which is almost eight percent of their total life. In one lifetime we each will have upwards of two hundred thousand dreams. That is almost a quarter of a million chances to experience whatever our hearts desire. So in effect, by neglecting our dreams we are losing out on years and years of possible experience.

From my experience, I have found that I have at least two or three notable dream-related experiences per night on average. These experiences may be anything from going on roller coasters, exploring a tropical paradise, conversing with intelligent dream characters, or receiving insight on a daily matter, but these experiences are just as likely to be phenomenal ones like flying through the air, walking on the moon, or receiving flashes of ecstatic revelation. Whether these experiences are "real" or not does not really matter. It doesn't change the fact that I experienced them and I have memories of them. I have learned from them and I am grateful to have been able to experience them. Based on this average, I have estimated that I will be able to experience over fifty-five thousand things that I would have missed out on had I not developed my dreaming abilities, and that includes both lucid and non-lucid experiences. When viewed in this light, the importance of our dreaming life takes on new meaning.

In the words of Bonnell, " Of all the riches that we hug, of all the pleasures that we enjoy, we can carry no more out of this world than out of a dream." What is it that we can carry out of a dream? The memory and the wisdom we gain from the experience. Dreams are the ultimate playgrounds for the mind and soul. You will find that the more you develop your dreaming side the more you will be developing your overall self. You will have a greater access to your subconscious and this will create true change and true progress. In our current day and age of materialism and reductionism, when correcting problems we often treat the symptoms instead of addressing the true cause. By developing your dreaming side you will

be in direct contact with the ultimate cause, YOU.

As we move forward on our journey, I'd like to pose this question to spark some inner thought. It eloquently elaborates on the quote by Bonnell in the previous paragraph.

"If you realized that the nurtured spiritual part of yourself would accompany you on your eternal journey and that everything else you labored so hard to accumulate would vanish the instant you depart this world, would it alter your daily agenda?"

-Walter Cooper, in "Restoring the Shattered Spirit".

V. SUMMARY OF DREAM APPROACHES

The whole concept of dreaming is a phenomenal process that has been severely downplayed in our materialistic society. If we weren't so desensitized to them, we would still see and feel the magic that surrounds them. We have had dreams all of our lives and no one has ever really explained their purpose. As a matter of fact, there has been such disregard to our dreams that they are usually considered trivial, or even worse yet they are viewed as some sort of pictorial regurgitation of our daily thoughts. With such a lack of understanding about the meaning and purpose of dreams, it isn't surprising that the treasures they have to offer have been overlooked.

Sadly, we have been raised in a society in which does not value dreams in the literal sense of the word. Even the word "dream" itself is applied with mixed meanings. For example, we are told to follow our dreams and how lucky would one be if he was living out his dreams. If we experience something very wonderful, we may say, "It was like a dream". Or someone might say, "I had to pinch myself to make sure that I wasn't dreaming." In this way, dreams are viewed as wonderfully inspiring things. They give us access to our innermost desires. They allow us the ultimate opportunity to maximize our experience. The word "dream" when used in this positive sense is associated with the highest of our hopes, the greatest of our aspirations and the utmost of our desires. It is used to convey how things should be in our version of a perfect world. In short, the word "dream" is closely related with the concept of being ideal.

Let's now look at the other way in which the word "dream" is used. When we have lofty ideas, we may be called a dreamer but that is merely a polite way of saying that we have ideas that don't fit into the consensual reality. People may say, "Wake up and smell the coffee." or "In your dreams!!!". In this sense, the word "dream" is linked to the concept of being an illusion. They are viewed as something that is not real. Something which is "dreamed up" is believed to be false. I have always found the following phrase to be thoroughly amusing, "It's good to have your dreams, but let's get back down to reality." This is a perfect way to thoroughly dishearten any child. Herein lies the dilemma. We are taught simultaneously that dreams are ideal yet they are also not real. Idealism is pitted against reality as if the two were incapable of existing together. The resulting battle between dream and reality creates a society and a world in which the optimistic dreaming side of our nature becomes suppressed and dominated by the so-called solid facts of "reality".

Although we as a culture don't place emphasis on the importance of dreams, there are other cultures that take a different approach. The Senoi of Malaysia have an inspiring culture that places a strong emphasis upon dreams. Patricia Garfield, Ph.D. did a marvelous job of writing about this culture in her book,

"Creative Dreaming". I will only touch upon the many benefits this society receives by placing importance on their dreams. For those interested in a more in-depth covering, I highly recommend all of her books. The Senoi dreamers are a primitive tribe that lives in the jungles of Malaysia. Just as we were raised to value money and material objects, they were raised to place value on their dream lives. Every morning at breakfast they discuss their dreams and try to make the most out of their nocturnal journeys. After breakfast they break up into groups to more thoroughly examine each dream and the meanings which may be embedded within them. They use their dreams as vehicles to develop themselves and their society as a whole.

If someone has a dream in which they do something negative to another member of their society, they are obligated to do something nice to that person in waking life. This obviously points to the fact that the Senoi place much more emphasis on the power of thought whether they are "dream thoughts" or waking thoughts. To think negatively towards someone is to do that person an injustice. They have developed their own guidelines and protocol that members are encouraged to follow within their dreams to make the most of them. They are taught to always confront and overcome danger, always move towards pleasurable and positive experiences, always bring the dream to a positive outcome, and always extract a creative product from it which will benefit the community like an invention or a song or a dance. Following these practices is a wise practice that has dramatic payoffs.

As a society, the Senoi have abnormally low incidences of violence according to a Western point of view. With the rising prevalence of violence in our communities, our newspapers and the media are filled with stories of drive-by shootings, school massacres, and crazed sociopaths, and that's just the tip of the brutal iceberg. It is nearly impossible to go through a single day without witnessing or hearing about some form of violence. We have been so thoroughly indoctrinated and desensitized to senseless violence that sadly we have accepted it as an unfortunate but normal occurrence like hurricanes or floods, but it shouldn't have to be this way.

Along with an abnormally low rate of violence, the Senoi have accomplished an absolutely monumental feat. There are virtually no incidences of mental illness among the Senoi. Compared to the rampant cornucopia of mental illnesses in our culture, this is a staggering accomplishment. Imagine our world being free of depression, schizophrenia, psychopathic dementia, and all other mental diseases. We currently have so much potential for mental illness that we have to continually update our medical professions with new mental diseases like attention deficit disorder, seasonal affective disorder, "road rage" and my recent favorite, "Internet addiction". I'm not implying that these mental conditions are trivial by any means. It just makes you wonder what we as a society are doing wrong. Could it be that there is a direct link between our working with our dreams and our mental health? I think the evidence is overwhelming, and the Senoi are but one culture that shows through example how dreaming can improve our lives and enhance our communities as a whole.

Another culture that is extremely influenced by dreaming can be observed in the Australian Aboriginal way of life. They refer to dreaming as Dreamtime, and have the central belief in their culture that everything that exists originates within Dreamtime. In the beginning, all that existed was Dreamtime, and over time, the world as they know it was dreamed into existence. Dreamtime is an actual place or realm. It exists just as much as the waking world. As a matter of fact, it is even more "real" because everything comes from it and will eventually return to it while everything in our waking world gives the impression of being solid when in fact it is really illusory.

For such a primitive people according to Western views, it is extremely remarkable how their beliefs predate what we are just now discovering through quantum physics. Their Dreamtime seems to correspond to our Unified Field Theory as well as the physicist Neil Bohr's Imaginal Realm. The current focus of our new sciences is to define the one unified field which interpenetrates all matter and through which all matter manifests. This unified field is much like the backdrop of our world that is both the source as well as the returning place of everything. Everything changes and rearranges through endless mutations and permutations but the one unified field theoretically remains the dynamic same. In retrospect it seems that this so-called primitive tribe has known this concept and more importantly has been consciously interacting with it since they were dreamed into existence.

Like the Senoi, the Aboriginals discuss their dreams and use them as vehicles for gaining self-empowerment as well as realizing how interrelated they are to their environment. Their dreams can help settle tribal disputes or discover the ailment and cure for a particular member. They can even use their dreams as vehicles to gain information about their waking world. A member may dream the whereabouts of a wild animal and inform the group of the location upon awakening. In their harsh, rugged environment one member's dreams could lead to tomorrow's meal for the community. By placing importance on dreams of this nature they have become more adept at incubating these types of dreams, and in the process they have cultivated very high levels of intuition as well.

Another culture that emphasizes dreaming is found among the Tibetan monks who are also equally skilled in "other-worldly" traveling. Some of the Tibetan monks were required to develop their dreaming abilities and turn them into lucid dreaming excursions as a prerequisite for seeking enlightenment. It was and is taught that having control of the dream leads the dreamer to the realization that our material "reality" is as illusory as the dreaming realm. The Tibetan monks would ideally be trained to maintain awareness of their consciousness continually whether awake or asleep. Talk about maximizing one's experience!

If all the scientists and knowledgeable people of our modern society were to disappear tomorrow, we would be left with a bunch of machinery and technology that no one would know how to operate. All the manuals and texts to operate this equipment would do us no good because we wouldn't be able to understand it. Over time the terminology and text might even be viewed as keys to some kind of mystical knowledge.

Along the same line of reasoning, there have been groups of people that have had the knowledge needed to access and alter levels of consciousness. With repeated practice and experience these people learned more and more and developed means for using these altered states of consciousness. They developed rituals and routines to repeatedly gain access to these "other worlds". Sadly, with history being a series of class and cultural struggles, the victors of these conflicts often rewrote history and decimated the cultures they conquered. The persecution of shamanism is a perfect example of this type of cultural warfare.

Shamans are the tribal healers and group leaders who play a pivotal role in maintaining the wellbeing of their community. There are countless examples of shamans healing people who could not be helped by conventional means of medicine. Shamans go into a trance-like state and then consciously maneuver their awareness through dream-like realms. They may find a cure for a patient or find a lost object or attempt to solve some communal problem while "journeying" in this other realm.

It may be hard to fathom exactly what they do but our lack of faith stems mostly from our upbringing. Throughout our whole lives we have been led to believe that shamans are just witch doctors that practice

some pseudo-science, a combination of non-sense hocus pocus and trickery. We are the ones who are deluded. Just because we don't understand it or can't believe that it could be possible, the fact of the matter is that in many cases it does work, and just as often it works repeatedly. So to answer whether it is real or not, let me quote C.G. Jung, "The real is what works."

Not only does it have practical and effective results, but there appears to be an inherent legitimacy when you examine the overall shamanic traditions. If you compare the procedures used by shamans cross-culturally, there are far too many similarities to have been based on quackery or hocus-pocus. Data collected by the ethnographer Johannes Wilbert found "a remarkable correspondence...not only in general content but in specific detail" between shamans from Siberia, China, Australia, Indonesia, Japan, South America, Mexico and native North America. The startling fact is that the geographical isolation between these regions would rule out any possibility of contact between groups, yet they all have near-universal beliefs and practices.

One feature that will be of particular importance to us is their universal use of the drum or rattle. The shaman uses the rattle to go into a trance and "journey" into other worlds. The shaman is said to ride the beats of the rattle or drum into another realm. Scientific studies of shamanic rituals have shown that the patterns of the drum's beats or the rattle's pulse facilitate a process known as entrainment. Entrainment is a process whereby a consistent oscillation or in layman's terms, a cycle of beats, will tend to influence other oscillations to become in sync thereby entraining them to a common pulse. I'll cover this more in detail when we discuss tools that can be used for increasing lucidity. For now, the point is that without even knowing about brainwave frequencies, somehow these shamans stumbled onto a process where they were changing their brainwave frequencies by use of a drum or rattle. The steady repetitive beats entrain the shaman's brain to particular frequencies. By analyzing the tempo of the beats it has been found that the shamans are usually brought into a mind state dominated by theta waves.

So just as these ancient shamans somehow managed to discover means for altering their awareness, they became skilled at going into a trance-like state to retrieve information, heal the sick, or perform a wide variety of other functions which would help the community. Some shamans even initiated their apprentices by requiring them to travel into other non-physical "realities" and come back with an accurate description of the particular "reality" which the shaman could then verify since he/she had already been there. This may sound like make-believe, but there are many reports that collaborate this practice and the successful retrieval of such information is proof positive that it can in fact be done. There is also a widespread belief that the intent of the shaman or groups of shamans can uphold some non-physical "realities" and these viable worlds can be visited repeatedly as if they were actual cities in our waking world. Whole lineages of shamans could maintain contact through these consensual "realities". Shambala and Shangri'La are two such other-worldly cities that have been written about throughout the centuries.

With the proliferation of war and strife between cultures, there was an obvious negative impact on the accumulating knowledge that these shamans had been compiling. A conquering country or even a competing culture would often try to overcome the native people by destroying not just their government and lands but also their belief systems. It isn't hard to see that by destroying a people's ancient wisdom and discrediting their leaders they have less chance of regrouping and posing a future threat. This cultural persecution may have helped the conqueror's colonization of acquired lands, but the ultimate cost was the repression and annihilation of many centuries worth of accumulated information. Now that there are many people interested in expanding their views of "reality" it seems that all this information would be

considered extremely valuable. All this knowledge could have been compiled and refined and expanded upon over time.

Imagine a world where developing our mental and spiritual potential was as important as the need to develop our physical side? Imagine focusing the power of our technology, or even a certain percentage of it, upon increasing our levels of awareness and expanding our consciousness as opposed to developing disposable cameras? If this were the case, do you think that our present state of modern civilization would be so uncivilized?

In our society there are few remnants of this rich shamanic tradition. Aside from artists and innovators, psychologists and psychiatrists are the only professionals who consider dreams to be more than just nocturnal nonsense. Much like the shamans of the past they use dreams as vehicles to treat both people who suffer from serious forms of mental dysfunction as well as people who just want to maximize their well-being by having a better grasp of their innermost thoughts and feelings. The importance of this dreamwork is undisputed, but when viewed from a broader perspective, it also points out a serious flaw in the fabric of our culture. By failing to place importance on our dreams, our society seems locked into a vicious cycle of self-repair, literally. Wouldn't it make more sense if everyone were taught the benefits that their dreams have to offer instead of waiting until it was too late and then using dreams as a vehicle to heal or make them whole again? An ounce of prevention could result in better mental health for our overall community.

Luckily, there still exists a great deal of shamanic knowledge that hasn't been extinguished. Several researchers are attempting to collect and record the existing knowledge before it is lost forever. One such researcher, Michael Harner, is the founder and director of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies in Norwalk, Connecticut. It is a foundation that not only funds research on shamanism but also focuses on sharing the knowledge they find with the public. They hold seminars and workshops where participants can take an active part in age-old shamanic rituals. I have not yet attended a workshop but I know several people who have and they all agree that it was a profoundly rewarding experience.

Through personal experience people are beginning to see that these shamans knew and know a lot more than we have ever been led to believe, or disbelieve in this case. Especially with today's burdening health concerns, there appears to be a trend towards alternative medicine and other approaches that aren't board-certified and based in the mainstream, and the results speak for themselves. We as a society are starting to realize that our minds and our belief systems play a much larger role in our health than we previously were told. Study after study is proving that the mind holds magical healing potentials. Which isn't that surprising if you ask me, I mean, when we get a cut on our arm, we are responsible for healing ourselves, not some outside force, so why all of the sudden is it some "new discovery" that the mind can heal? It sounds like a reawakening to the once-known and accepted beliefs of the ancient shamans.

By taking the best that our technology has to offer and coupling it with what we know of the shamanic traditions, we may make some amazing discoveries. There are some innovative companies that have been attempting to elevate a person's consciousness by applying today's technology. There are various products ranging from sleep masks which detect and signal the sleeper when he/she is dreaming to brain entrainment devices which operate much like the shaman's rattle to create specific brainwaves in the user. There are numerous devices already available and many more on the drawing board. These devices can help the user much like training wheels can help someone learn how to ride a bike. After you've learned the ropes, you can take them off and ride on your own. We'll touch on these more when we

explore the section on consciousness tools, but for now, it is important to note that the merging between technology and consciousness is beginning to take place.

By de-emphasizing our dreams, we are in effect limiting ourselves by cutting off our access to an infinite source of experience. In this ever-changing world, there is one constant that is overlooked by most of our society. Every night we tuck ourselves into our beds and drift off into sleep. We all sleep and we all dream. It is as natural as eating and breathing. Even if you don't think that you dream, you do. Because you aren't remembering your dreams, doesn't mean that you don't dream. It just means that your dream recall has been decreased, and in some sad cases, this pattern can become so thoroughly engrained that no dreams are remembered at all. We are as much our dreaming selves as we are our waking selves, yet most people go through life only developing the waking part of their total self.

"Our life is composed greatly from dreams, from the unconscious, and they must be brought into connection with action. They must be woven together."-Anais Nin. Every day we are awake for a certain part of the day and asleep and dreaming for another part. As mentioned earlier, we literally spend years of our life in our own dreaming realm. There are not only ways to learn how to remember more of your dreams which we discuss in an upcoming section, but there are tried and tested methods which you can easily learn which will allow you to take full advantage of your dreams. By following these tips and practicing them, you will learn more about yourself and more about your life in general.

Just as most people dream and aren't consciously aware that they are dreaming, many people are barely conscious even when they are awake. They go through their day as if they were in some kind of waking slumber as if they were running on auto-pilot mode. Unbeknownst to themselves, they are thinking other people's thoughts, taking for granted what other people say, and bouncing between magazine thoughts of how they aren't as skinny as some waif-like model and billboard thoughts of how they want a juicy Big Mac. To develop your dreaming abilities you must be more aware of your awareness. You are the one who makes a difference. You are the driver behind the wheel of your consciousness. You can sit back passively and watch everything happen and complain as most of our society does or you can do something about it.

By taking the initiative and developing your dreaming abilities, you are in effect developing your ability to access higher levels of consciousness. You will be laying the groundwork for the lifelong journey of expanding your awareness. You will learn first-hand that your thoughts have an extremely powerful affect on your "reality". You will see that what you think during the day slips into your dreams just as your experiences from your dreams can slip into your waking world. You will experience first-hand how your belief systems mold and influence your experiences. Working with dreams will give you access to all these opportunities and more.

The following words of Leonardo daVinci allude to the mysterious yet palpable rewards that can be found in our dreams, "Why does the eye see things more clearly in dreams than the mind while awake?" From this quote it is apparent that the ultimate Renaissance man appreciated what dreams have to offer, and this fact remains true today. Just because our society doesn't place a great deal of importance on dreaming, that doesn't mean that dreaming is unimportant. As a matter of fact, we could learn a great deal by looking at cultures like the Senoi, the Australian Aboriginals, the Tibetan monks, and the wide variety of shamanic traditions that are found throughout the world. These cultures should not be viewed as primitive. They should be seen as lucky exceptions to the rule. They were fortunate enough to preserve the ancient knowledge that many other cultures including our own has somehow lost.

VI. **BRIEF SUMMARY OF LUCID DREAMS**

We are getting closer and closer to our mark, we have covered the power of our mind and how our thoughts create belief systems which in turn influence our experiences. We have briefly explored the process of dreaming. We have seen how everyone dreams, yet most people don't place that much importance on the dreaming side of our lives. We have also started to realize that there is more to our world than meets the eye, and we are ready to start developing our dreaming side and developing our awareness in general.

In this section, we will briefly touch upon some background information concerning lucid dreaming. In the back of this manual, I have listed a number of great books that contain extensive research into the history of lucid dreams. I'd recommend reading the history presented in Stephen LaBerge's book, "Lucid Dreaming", for a more in-depth account for anyone interested. For our intents and purposes, the history of lucid dreaming isn't quite as important as the fact that it *does* exist. Actually, it has existed for quite some time possibly for as long as the process of dreaming itself has existed. Our focus is upon learning how to lucid dream and maximizing progress along the way, but a little background information may serve to enhance the overall validity of the subject.

The existence of lucid dreams has been noted many times in past literature, but the term "lucid dream" was coined at the turn of the century by Frederik VanEeden, a Dutch psychiatrist. He used the term to describe dreams he had in which he was fully conscious and fully aware that he was dreaming while he was dreaming. He presented a paper to the Society for Psychical Research that contained several hundred lucid dreams he had compiled over a series of years. Today, there are many wonderful lucid dream enthusiasts who are generously contributing to the field. Thanks to the works of people like Celia Green, Patricia Garfield, Ann Faraday, Gail Gackenbach, Robert Moss, Alan Worsley, and Stephen LaBerge, lucid dreaming is becoming more widely understood, and more importantly, it is becoming more widely practiced.

Although its history can be traced through various sources, lucid dreaming has only recently been recognized officially by our scientific community. Due mostly to the scientific scrutiny of laboratory studies being conducted by various dream researchers, lucid dreaming is being evaluated in a different light. Believe it or not, before the research that proved the existence of lucid dreams, there were many scientists who scoffed at the idea that it was even possible to be fully conscious while dreaming. A Stanford dream researcher, Stephen LaBerge, conducted experiments in which the lucid dreamer would signal by means of making eye movements when he or she became lucid in a dream. Coincidentally, Alan Worsley, a British dream researcher, was testing this same method of having dreamers use eye signals to indicate if they were lucid. They separately confirmed that this was indeed possible. Since lucid dreaming has been proven to exist from a scientific standpoint, hopefully it will begin to gather momentum now that it falls within the tightly grasped belief systems of our scientific community. More research and more studies will only add more needed knowledge to the growing field.

Stephen LaBerge has been conducting extensive scientific research into lucid dreaming and has co-founded The Lucidity Institute, a foundation dedicated to the advancement of lucid dreaming. The

Lucidity Institute is a very valuable source of information. They have a wonderful website with an archive of insightful articles. They also offer a catalog with various products including the craving of all lucid dreamers, the NovaDreamer. The NovaDreamer is a sleep mask that detects your eye movement while you sleep. It detects when you are in REM and flashes light cues in order to trigger a lucid dream. The NovaDreamer will be covered more thoroughly in the section dealing with tools and tactics for strengthening and aiding our awareness.

The Lucidity Institute also publishes a quarterly newsletter, the NightLight. I highly recommend subscribing to their newsletter and contributing to their cause. Aside from the luminous articles, each newsletter contains an experiment for you to attempt in your dreams. It's so easy you can do it in your sleep. Seriously though, the experiments pertain to various lucid dream-related ideas such as testing methods for prolonging lucidity or rating your level of pain in a lucid dream. After you attempt the experiment, you send your results back to The Lucidity Institute, and they tabulate the results and report any findings in the next newsletter.

So now that lucid dreaming is being evaluated and tested under a scientist's apparatus, it is now slowly but surely gaining followers. Earlier on, I mentioned many of the notable figures in the field, but there are far too many reputable dream researchers to mention them all. There are also many excellent writers who have written books on the subject. We'll talk about the importance of reading about the subject and which books are the best available in a later section, but for now we're ready to move on to the good stuff. Having covered all the necessary background concepts, we are ready to begin learning the basics.

PART II –The BASICS: Beginning Methods

VII. PREPARATION AND BUILDING BASIC SKILLS

So now we've come to the payoff. In order to make this material more user-friendly, the information has been divided into four categories. By getting an overview at a glance, it may be easier for you to thoroughly learn, absorb and internalize all the information. Hopefully, it will help tighten all the concepts into one working whole.

The Process

Section One: The Six Basic Steps

Section Two: Other methods

Section Three: General tips

Section Four: Tools and Tactics

All these sections have one objective: teaching you how to become lucid in your dreams. After you've learned the process, methods, tips, tools, and tactics, we'll cover the more advanced techniques that you will need to know once you become lucid.

The Process:

There are many techniques and methods that you can use for inducing lucid dreams, but there are

basically two different ways of becoming lucid. You can either have dream-induced or wake-induced lucid dreams. Stephen LaBerge coined the term D.I.L.D. (Dream Induced Lucid Dream) for dreams in which you become lucid while within a dream. By training your awareness, you will somehow realize that you are dreaming while you are dreaming. This is by far the most common way of having a lucid dream, but it is also possible to directly enter a lucid dream from a waking state. These Wake Induced Lucid Dreams, or W.I.L.D.s, are far more rare, but as LaBerge so aptly labeled them, they are quite an experience. While covering the basics we will be dealing primarily with dream induced lucid dreams. When we move beyond the basics, we will be dealing with the more advanced techniques that will include inducing W.I.L.D.s.

There are many methods to induce lucid dreams, but there is an underlying process behind most if not all of them. I've broken this underlying process down into six basic steps that will serve as our beginning regime. Once you absorb these steps and start following them, it is only a matter of time before you have your first lucid dream. In case you are wondering how long it will take for you to have your first one, just follow through with the steps and have faith that you will have one. According to statistics, the time it takes for someone to have their first lucid dream averages from three weeks to two months, but yours may be tonight so don't be discouraged if you try for a while and don't succeed. There seems to be an obsession in our society for instant results. If you are one of these people, realize that this is one of your first obstacles to overcome. Only one thing is certain: If you never stop trying, you are guaranteed to succeed.

The Six Basic Steps

1. **Doing the Mental Prep-Work**
2. **Increasing dream recall**
3. **Keeping a dream journal**
4. **Becoming familiar with your Dreams**
5. **Adding Awareness to your Waking Consciousness**
6. **Linking your Awareness to your Dreams**

Step One) Doing the Mental Prep-Work

This step involves setting up the right mental foundation and building a mental framework that will maximize your success. In order to do this you must take a look at your belief systems. I can't emphasize enough the crucial role that our belief systems play in determining our experience. As you develop your ability to lucid dream, you will be directly interacting with your thoughts and your belief systems, and you will be able to experience first hand how important it is to manage your thoughts.

Here are four key questions that you need to ask yourself. Do you think you can do this? Do you think dreams are important? Do you really want to have lucid dreams? Do you know what you will do when you become lucid? Not only should you be asking yourself these questions, but you should also be taking an active part in strengthening these beliefs or changing them if that is the case. Let's go over each of these questions to emphasize what kind of mental prep-work you need to be doing.

"*Do you think you can do this*?" For starters, you must always have a positive attitude. If you have any doubts, then your first assignment is to replace each and every doubt with a self-empowering belief. If you think lucid dreaming is some rare phenomenon, realize that it is a natural ability. There are literally thousands of lucid dreamers out there, and you too can become one by following the Six Basic Steps. If you think it is going to be difficult, assure yourself that it will come naturally. Just remember, tying your shoes as a child was difficult but with time it became second nature, and so too will lucid dreaming. As soon as you have your first lucid dream, it will be that much easier to have a second one, and a third one, and in due time you will be having them consistently.

"*Do you think dreams are important*?" Once you have a positive, confident attitude, the next step is to make dreaming a top priority. The simple act of believing that your dreams are important will dramatically increase your results. Most people don't place any emphasis on their dreams so they in turn don't recall many dreams, and not surprisingly most of these people are not even aware that it is possible to have lucid dreams. They don't know any better because they haven't made dreaming a priority. You, on the other hand, will view your dreams as an important part of your life, and this will speed up your progress substantially.

"*Do you really want to have lucid dreams*?" The key to this question is desire and enthusiasm. The more you cultivate your desire to have lucid dreams, the more emotionally charged your intent will be. The more charged your intent is, the more likely that these desires will produce results. Along the same lines, the more enthusiastic you are towards learning how to lucid dream, the more you will absorb and the more you will be actively drawing this experience towards you. *Sending messages to your subconscious that you think dreams are important and that you enthusiastically want to have them will speed up your progress dramatically*.

"*Do you know what you will do when you have a lucid dream*?" The point of this question is to be purposefully prepared. It sounds so simple, but just by having a predetermined plan of action you will increase the odds of becoming lucid. If you have a goal or a mission planned, you will have that much more reason to become lucid and carry out your mission. The plan should be well thought out and thoroughly embedded in your mind. Throughout the day and before going to bed, remind yourself of your goal, and in keeping with the last question, cultivate a desire to fulfill your goal. In the beginning, you may want to keep your plan simple. Your goal may be as simple as looking at your hands or surveying the dreamscape or maybe you would like to fly. As you develop the ability to prolong your lucid dreams, you will be able to carry out more elaborate missions.

So be positive. Replace doubt with confidence and skepticism with belief. View your dreams as being important. Make dreaming a priority. Cultivate your desire to reach your goal. Be enthusiastic. Be prepared and have a plan. As you can see these mental prep-work concepts do overlap and intertwine, so start making all of them work for you today. This mental conditioning will not only help speed up the lucid dreaming process, but you can apply it to any other aspects of your life that you would like to develop.

Step Two) Increasing Dream Recall

As mentioned earlier, if you can't remember your dreams it makes it that much harder to have lucid ones

so this step focuses on increasing your dream recall. You may be one of the fortunate ones who remember a lot of dreams, but if you are not, don't be discouraged. There are many tried and tested methods for developing your dream recall. There are so many effective tips for increasing dream recall that you can count on remembering more and more of your dreams within a few weeks of disciplined practice.

For starters, do you really want to remember your dreams? Why? Could you be subconsciously blocking your own recall because you may be afraid of what you see? These are legitimate questions to be asking yourself. Be honest with yourself. You must make the commitment to yourself to increase your dream recall because it is important to you and it is something that you want to develop. You need to make it a conscious priority. After taking this step, it is just a matter of incorporating these techniques into your morning schedule.

Here is a list of tips and techniques that will help increase your dream recall:

1.) *Wake Motionlessly*. Upon awakening, don't open your eyes. Don't move. Lie completely still. Stay in the exact position you are in upon awakening and attempt to remember your dreams without moving a muscle.

2.) *Wake Slowly*. Allow yourself time to naturally remember your dreams. Don't start thinking about what you are going to do for the day. Don't allow your mind to be flooded by your waking thoughts or your dreams will start fading or may even disappear entirely like bursting dream bubbles. Let your mind be focused on whatever you were just dreaming.

3.) *Let your mind drift*. Allow your thoughts to meander through whatever mental imagery you may have. Once you remember one part of a dream, relax and allow the rest of the pieces to fall into place.

4.) *Drift through your dream checklist*. If you have absolutely no initial recall then you should start running through a dream checklist in your mind. This list should include people you know, activities, places, foods, smells, music, anything that may trigger a dream fragment to surface. Allow your mind to drift through this list and ask yourself if this person or this place was in your dream. Movement is very common in dreams so try to think about action. Were you walking or running or climbing or flying? Emotions are also very prevalent so try to think about your moods. Were you happy or afraid or surprised or confused? The more familiar you become with your dreams the better you will know which questions will most likely trigger your memory, but in the beginning you can use any list as long as it is a big one.

5.) *Think and question backwards*. Try to work your memory backwards from what you can remember. You will usually remember the most recent dream scenario first so for maximum retrieval it is helpful to think backwards, or think in terms of effect and cause instead of cause and effect. If you can remember one part of the dream, ask yourself how you got there? Or where did a certain dream object come from? Did you find it? Was it given to you? One dream fragment will usually lead to another until the whole dream starts to take shape.

You can increase your dream recall by questioning yourself about what you already remember.

6.) *Try different sleeping positions*. After awakening and remaining motionless for long enough to remember all that you can of your dreams, try all of your common sleeping positions before getting out of bed to maximize your recall. You will have the best recall when you are lying in the same position that you were in while you were dreaming. If you wake up on your right side don't move until you recall all you possibly can, and then repeat this process on your left side, then your back, and then on your front. This may jar loose some memories and it certainly will speed up your recall.

7.) *Keep Trying*. Sometimes, you may have no morning recall but flashes of dream memories will surface during your day. Be prepared to remember or write down any time-released memories. They may unlock your access to even more memories.

8.) *Ask yourself to remember your dreams*. This may sound silly or too simple to be effective, but it is a very powerful tool. Before going to bed, set up a desire to remember your dreams, and simply ask yourself to remember your dreams. Whenever I have foggy recall for a few days in a row, I use this technique and it usually produces great results.

If you are still having trouble recalling your dreams, here is a sure-fire method that will have you remembering your dreams in no time. We know that most of our dreams occur in the last hours of our sleep so we can safely assume that this is the target time to be exercising our recall. We also know that we have a much greater likelihood of remembering a dream if we awaken directly from it, and this leads us to the ultimate method for maximizing your dream recall, *the Alarm Clock Method.*

***The Alarm Clock Method*:** Using an alarm clock is one of the quickest and easiest ways to start increasing your dream recall especially if you rarely remember your dreams. The idea is to set your alarm for a time when you will be dreaming and awaken yourself directly from a dream while fresh memories are still in your head. The earlier morning hours are the best time to use this method since this is when you are most likely to be dreaming. Your alarm clock will become a valuable tool for increasing your dream recall, and in a later section I will mention how it can be used to induce lucid dreams. Here are a few ways to take full advantage of your alarm clock. Try them all to see what works best for you

"The Early Morning Technique" Set your alarm for two hours before you normally would awaken. When it goes off, reset it to go off in a half an hour. Do this each time it goes off and you will have instant and plentiful recall. This is one of the most effective techniques because it takes full advantage of your natural dreaming cycle and it creates a daily target time when you habitually practice your dreaming skills. These few hours before you normally would awaken are going to become your new training grounds. This target time zone will be described in much greater detail when we cover lucid dream induction methods and again when we take a look at the lucid dream terrain.

Depending on how poor your recall is you may want to immediately write down your dreams each time the alarm awakens you. If you don't, you may experience what I refer to as "dream superimposition". It happens when you wake up during the night and have vivid recall of your dreams. Your memories are so

vivid that you are sure you will remember them later; however, when you go back to bed you have even more dreams and upon reawakening the most recent dream memories have replaced the previous ones. As a result, those once vivid details are now foggy or even completely erased. As you exercise your dream recall your memory will become better and consequently less dream superimposition will take place, but even after years of training it still happens to me sporadically.

"*The Waking at Odd Hours Technique"* This technique is pretty self-explanatory. Set your alarm to go off at any random times throughout the night. The major advantage of this technique is that if you are extremely eager to develop your dreaming skills you may not want to settle for only two hours of practice a day. You can use this technique along with the previous one to maximize your exercise. If you are someone who needs a good night of uninterrupted sleep then this technique may not be for you, but if you can bear the intermittent buzzing the results will be well worth the effort.

"*The Snooze Button Method"* Set your alarm for a time before you would normally wake up and then continually hit the snooze button until you have to get out of bed. This is probably the most common technique, and the odds are that you have already had some experience with this one unless your alarm does not have a snooze button. By hitting the snooze button you are constantly coming in and out of dreams so you dramatically increase your recall, and it is very helpful for inducing lucid dreams as well, but let's not get too far ahead of ourselves. We need to increase our dream recall before we can start focusing on inducing lucid dreams, and this leads us to one of the most significant steps of all, keeping a dream journal.

Step Three) Keeping a dream journal

The ***single most important thing*** that you can do to increase your dream recall and to maximize your lucid dreaming progress is to keep a dream journal. This increases your recall by engraining the idea that dreams are important. It also helps you become familiar with your particular dreams, which is the focus of the next step. The habit of writing down your dreams soon becomes a habit of recalling your dreams. **If you seriously want to learn to lucid dream, you MUST keep a dream journal. It is not an option.**

I strongly emphasize this because I know from experience that keeping a journal is a crucial part of the process. I had been trying to lucid dream for several months with little success until I started keeping one. Shortly after I started consistently making my dream journal entries, I began to recall more dreams with greater clarity and detail, and this led to my first lucid dream. Even now after years of lucid dreaming, I still see a significant correlation. *If I neglect my dream journal, my lucid dreams become slightly less frequent.* All it usually takes is a few days of making entries and I will be back on the lucid track.

Here are some tips on keeping your journal. Record all of your dreams with as much detail as you can. Even if something seems trivial, you should still write it down because it may turn out to be significant when viewed in the long run. Write down not only what happened during the dream but also what you were feeling and what you were thinking at the time. These emotional and mental notes will help you later when you are becoming familiar with your dreams. This will also help you see how your daily affairs and your waking mind influence your dreams. For example, you may notice during times of stress that you will have stress-influenced dreams. You may dream of being late for an exam or being unprepared for a business meeting. The point is that your dreams are sending you a message. They are reflecting what you think and feel at a subconscious level. Looking at the patterns of your dreams and examining the recurrence of certain dream themes will tell you a lot about yourself and the areas in your

life that need attention. This is yet another reason why keeping your dream journal is so important. It allows you to have an overview of your unique dream patterns which are actually symbolic reflections of an ever changing you.

When keeping your journal, it is best to write your entries in present tense instead of using past tense. For example, you would write, "I'm walking down this street and I see a man" instead of "I walked down this street and saw a man." By writing in the present tense, you may be able to remember even more of your dreams as you are recording them. Also, when working with some of the methods we will cover later like dream reentry and dream incubation, it is best to be thinking and recording in terms of *now* not then. As an added bonus, writing in the present tense makes for better reading when you are reviewing your journal at a later date.

With each dream journal entry, you should include a date, a time if you can, and a title for each dream. To find a suitable name for your dream, imagine if it was a movie and choose the most appropriate title. Something simple is usually best as long as it captures the essence of the dream. Anything from "*Red ants in a rainforest*" to "*Class reunion on an airplane*" will be fine. If you have several different dreams during the night, it is best to separate and title each one. Mixing separate dreams together may make the dream's message harder to find and may make choosing a distinctive title nearly impossible. The main purpose of titling your dreams is to make them easier to access at a glance when you are looking through your dream journal.

Now, if you are like me or like most people, I am assuming one of two things. You are either going to think you can learn to lucid dream without keeping a dream journal or else you will start keeping a dream journal and before you know it, it will be gathering dust next to that book you've been planning on reading for about a year. I say this only because I thought the same way. Not to say that it could not be done, anything is possible, but why not increase your odds, maximize your results, and speed up the process with a proven method. Once you get into the habit of keeping your journal, it will become a daily routine like putting your clothes on in the morning. You just need to do it and consistently follow through with it. Keeping a dream journal is definitely not the easiest thing to do. I have spent many a day thumbing through random pieces of papers scribbled with dream accounts. Although it gets easier with time, in the beginning it may be helpful to follow some of the following pointers.

To make the journalizing process easier I have several suggestions based on different approaches I have tried combined with the advice of others. At first glance, it seems like such a simple thing. You dream, you wake up, and you write down your dreams, but there is much more to it than that. For example, when you awaken if you start writing in your journal as you are recalling the previous night's dreams, it is hard to remember everything accurately in the right sequence. You may have already moved on to a new scene but then you remember something you had forgotten. This prompted me to write everything I could remember on a sheet of paper and then after doing this I would write an organized account of it in my journal. This works fine if you have lots of free time but with time being a valuable commodity it is rather inefficient.

Along with the difficulty of balancing your time and determining how organized you need to have your journal, another problem you will encounter is the simple fact that you have to do a lot of writing which in itself can become monotonous. The best approach is to recall all that you can in your head before writing anything, but even so you probably will remember more as you are writing. By recording your dreams only on the right-hand pages of the journal, you can write late arriving memories on the left-hand

page and conveniently draw an arrow to the portion of the dream in which it occurred. You can also use the left-hand pages to draw pictures of any dream objects or maps of the dreamscape. This tip may require you to buy double the amount of journals, but if you want more organized entries it certainly works.

If you do choose to use this method, you should use the left-hand pages to record what you did while awake that day, where you went, who you saw, or any other details of your day. Whether you use the left/right page method or not, you should include this daily information somewhere in your journal, preferably on the same page as your dream entries. This can be very helpful when you are looking for patterns in your dreams. For example, I have found that I will often dream about things I have seen or experienced from two days before or two days after the dream. If I watched a program about natural disasters on Monday, I would not be surprised if I dreamed about it on Wednesday. If I dream about a person who I have not heard from in a while, they will usually call me two days later. I don't know why it happens, but by analyzing my dreams and the journal entries of what I did for the day, I have found this to be one of my dream patterns.

Many people recommend using a Dictaphone to record your dreams. Upon awakening you can just speak your dreams aloud into the recorder, and enter them into your journal later. I've tried this method and found that for me this is not the way to go. It is not very time efficient. It certainly is easier to record them verbally, but the problem comes when you are transcribing these tapes. It takes far too long to listen to these recordings and write them down in your journal. Also, you still have the problem of trying to keep the dream's sequencing in order and this becomes even more troublesome when using a Dictaphone or tape recorder.

There are many different styles of journal keeping and everyone may have a natural preference, but if you want to save some time and you have access to a computer then you may be in luck.. Learning mostly through trial and error, I have developed an extremely easy and efficient method. Prompted by the idea of how wonderful it would be if my Dictaphone could write up my journal entries for me, I employed the help of my personal computer. There are many reasonably priced speech to text recognition programs available for most home computers. I purchased a program called IBM ViaVoice98 for around fifty dollars. After installing and setting up the program, it will convert what you say directly into text on your computer screen. You can speak at a normal pace and it does all the typing for you. Most importantly, you can use it directly with Microsoft Word, a common word processing program. This allows you to dictate directly into the word processor and when you are done you can save it as a file and store it in your new computerized dream journal.

The speech to text program is by no means flawless, but it works just fine for a dream journal. It may make an occasion error but the journal entries as a whole are relatively legible and the time saved is enormous. Having a few jumbled words here and there is much easier to correct than doing everything by hand. It completely removes the burden of writing down your dreams, and it totally solves the problem of jumbled dream sequences because you can cut and paste any misplaced dream fragments into the appropriate places. If you have the resources, this is by far the easiest and most efficient way of keeping a dream journal.

There is also a wide variety of dream journal software available on the Internet and possibly at your local computer store. Two of the better programs available are *Awaken98* by Awake-software.com and *Alchera Suite 3* by Mythwell.com. They are reasonably priced between thirty to forty dollars depending

on the program. These programs can be extremely useful for keeping an organized journal, analyzing your dreams, and cross-referencing past dreams. They have features that allow you to search your journal for particular words. For example, if you were interested in examining any dreams with beaches in them, you could search your entire journal for a keyword like "beach", and the program would scan and retrieve any dream entries that contain the keywords. This can be an extremely efficient way of analyzing your dream patterns. They even contain a feature that allows you to look up the meaning of particular dream images by using a built-in dream dictionary. As you become more familiar with your own dream symbolism, you can even personalize the definitions to reflect your own specific meanings.

The wonders of modern technology are beginning to put an end to the paper-based journal. With all the benefits of dream journal software it definitely seems to be the way to go, but there is one problem. I have not found any programs that have integrated the speech to text capability. Since this speech to text method outperforms any other methods I have found thus far, the best way to overcome this problem is to use a dream journal program that can import text like *Awaken98*. This way you can take advantage of the both benefits. You can journalize your dreams with a speech to text program using your word processor and then copy and paste the text into the dream journal program. Again, if you have access to a computer you should seriously consider incorporating it into your dreaming regime, and if you don't have a computer, you may now have a need for one.

Step Four) Becoming familiar with your Dreams

As your dream journal grows and your dream recall increases, naturally you will become more familiar with your dreams. Certain people, certain places, and certain activities may be more likely to appear in your dreams. For example, you may have a majority of dreams in which you are at your office or at school or at the beach. Certain dream themes might also be more common than others might. You may dream of being a hero or you may dream of being chased. These recurrent patterns in your dreams are your dreamsigns, and they will be the first stepping stones on your path to lucid dreaming.

By learning your distinctive dreamsigns, you will be able to further increase your recall. Making a list of your dreamsigns is a great idea. If you are having trouble recalling any dreams, you can run down your list of dream signs and question yourself to see if any of them will spark a memory. Sometimes, by jarring just one dream fragment loose you can recover the whole dream so knowing and using your dreamsigns may give you just the edge you need to overcome a morning bout of dream amnesia.

By working with your dreamsigns, you will develop an intimate relationship with your dreams. They will become more accessible and easier to understand. It is helpful to ask yourself why you are dreaming what you dream. What do these dreamsigns mean to you? The more you understand not only your dreamsigns but what they mean, the more you will benefit from them in both your dream life and your waking life.

If at first you are having trouble identifying your dreamsigns, realize that your dreamsigns don't have to be extraordinarily unique. As a matter of fact, they may be the most ordinary things. For example, you may have dreams about your previous day or you may dream of cleaning your house. Whatever it is that you dream about, you need to be noting the patterns and commonalties. You can start with whatever patterns you notice no matter how insignificant they seem. Using these as a springboard, you will soon begin to notice more patterns developing. The process of looking for patterns may in fact create the

patterns themselves so if you are having trouble finding your dreamsigns, just keep looking and they will emerge.

The quest to discover and understand your dreamsigns is a lifelong journey because your dream signs are continually evolving just like you. Some themes may last for only a week and then disappear, only to resurface a month later. Other dream signs and patterns will last much longer. As times change and as you change, your dreamsigns, being a reflection of you and your thoughts, will change as well. Keeping up with your dreamsigns will keep you in touch with yourself.

With the help of your journal, you can easily spot the recurrent dreamsigns and you can get an overview of how they are changing. As you are making entries to your journal, you should make note of any dreamsigns that you spot. You can underline them or put a star next to them. Any notation will do as long as it is consistent and noticeable. The idea is to have them accessible at a glance so when you pick up your journal in the future you will easily see the change in the pattern of patterns, your ever-changing dreamsigns.

Identifying your dreamsigns also plays a crucial part in the lucid dreaming process. Your dreamsigns are in effect "signs that you are dreaming". As you will soon learn in the sixth step, you can train yourself to notice your dreamsigns while you are dreaming and this will be your springboard into lucidity, but before we hop into that topic we will discuss ways of strengthening your awareness.

Step Five) Adding Awareness to your Waking Consciousness

This step alone could be the subject of its own book. It is almost a method in itself, but used in conjunction with the other steps, it becomes an optimal way to learn lucid dreaming. As a matter of fact, the whole process of lucid dreaming is achieved by training your awareness. The idea is to increase our daily awareness in order to benefit from the carryover effects it will have on our dreaming awareness. If you are more aware during the day, you will become more aware while dreaming. There are many ways to increase our awareness, and we will delve into many of them in this section. The handling and manipulation of our awareness will become one of the central issues for the rest of this manual. Ironically, as you begin to exercise and strengthen your awareness you may just realize that you are not usually aware of how unaware you really are throughout most of your day.

Since this is such an important aspect, it is crucial to have a workable understanding of these concepts. The ultimate goal is learning how to apply these principles to create results. First, we will deal with the concept of awareness and then we will learn the practical applications. The term awareness as we will be referring to it applies to your consciousness. *How conscious are you?* It alludes to your current level of self-observation. *How aware are you of your awareness?* It refers to your level of mindfulness. *How centered is your awareness?* It refers to your waking mental state of affairs. *How truly aware are you?* For our purposes here, these questions will culminate in your dreams when you become aware that you are dreaming by asking yourself, *am I aware?* And ultimately, *am I dreaming?*

For many people these reflective questions go unasked and in turn they remain unanswered. Most people were never taught that there are differing levels of awareness nor were they ever taught how to cultivate a heightened sense of awareness. To them, either one is awake or one is sleeping. The fact is that you can be fully conscious, semi-conscious, and not conscious at all in your dreams as well as in your waking life. It all depends on your level of mindfulness, your quality of awareness. Do you ever realize you've

been listening to the radio yet haven't heard it for several minutes? Do you ever drive somewhere methodically and not remember the drive once you arrive? How about misplacing your keys? Moments of "zoning out" like this occur when your awareness strays from the moment at hand. It is a result of losing your mindfulness, becoming mentally scattered. You may have been daydreaming or planning your day or truly "in a zone", but the resulting experience is that you were not fully aware of your position in your current surroundings.

There is nothing wrong with daydreaming or planning your day. The point is that we often overlook the transition of our awareness from one moment to the next. The thoughts we have often flutter through our minds without us even taking note of them, let alone actively taking part in their creation and guidance. The point is not to be obsessed with your surroundings but to be aware of your awareness. Becoming aware of your thoughts and thinking patterns is just as important as identifying your dreamsigns and dream patterns. Changing your thoughts will change your awareness, and the idea is to have your awareness programmed and locked on self-observant aware mode instead of running on some non-reflective auto-pilot mode.

It is as if we are normally aware of riding the crest of a wave produced by external factors instead of guiding our awareness ourselves. We often react more than we reflect which leads to automated behavior. We become less questioning which in turn reduces our awareness to what we already know, or think we know. We habitually identify with our position on this crest so that after a while we fail to realize that there even are any other ways of viewing it. We overlook our part in the ocean. We disregard the active role that we play in guiding our awareness.

Try to remain aware of your awareness as if you were a bystander just watching where it goes and how it flows. The longer you can sustain this level of awareness, the better. But it isn't as easy as it sounds, and if you think it is, try sustaining it all day long and then realize how often you lose your mindfulness. The fact is that we aren't in the habit of being aware, but this is a habit that must be changed. How is your awareness flowing from one point to the next? How often throughout the day are you aware of your awareness as well as your position in your surroundings? It is this kind of mindfulness that you need to cultivate. It is this kind of centering and grounding of your awareness in awareness that you need to practice and develop until it becomes second nature, or hopefully even first nature.

Practicing meditation is an excellent way to exercise your awareness. Studies done by Jayne I. Gackenbach, a notable lucid dream researcher, show a direct correlation between meditation and lucid dreaming. People who meditate have a greater likelihood of having lucid dreams compared to non-meditators. Both meditators and lucid dreamers "are able to become "caught up" in an experience, and are aware of their inner thoughts and internal processes." (* Dreamtime,Dreamwork, pg244-45) This could be due to the emphasis put on consciously developing one's awareness. By exercising your awareness, you are more able to be "in the moment", an ability that greatly enhances your lucid dreaming ability. "In addition, meditators and lucid dreamers find it easier to recall their dreams and tend to be "field independent" (that is, they could find their way out of a forest more easily than "field dependent" people, because they are not as easily influenced by people or objects in their environment.)" (*Dreamtime/work, pg 245) Other studies by Alexander, Boyle, and Alexander have shown that both lucid dreamers and meditators "have less stress-related personality characteristics" than their non-meditating and non-lucid dreaming counterparts. Less stress means less stress-related dreams, and that results in better dreams as a whole. If lucid dreaming and meditating have these beneficial effects on our waking and dreaming lives, incorporating both practices into your daily routine will produce direct

results.

Meditation and lucid dreaming are intimately linked. By learning more about meditating and practicing it regularly, you will be stacking the odds in your favor when it comes to lucid dreaming. Many of the principles involved in meditation have a direct bearing on lucid dreaming. Meditation can be used to induce profound states of relaxation, and these relaxed states are extremely beneficial for inducing lucid dreams. Also, the goal of many meditational approaches is to silence the mind. Creating inner silence and stopping one's internal dialogue is an important technique we will cover when we discuss some of the methods of inducing lucid dreams.

Meditation also develops the ability to have a detached awareness, an awareness that allows itself to operate like a slightly removed observer. Once again, this ability to have a detached awareness will be extremely useful when attempting many of the lucid dream induction techniques. Meditation also requires developing a certain amount of control over your awareness. Since this is a major prerequisite for lucid dreaming, it is highly advisable to incorporate meditation into your lucid dreaming regime.

Now that you have an understanding of these concepts, the best way to create results is to apply them toward our goal, lucid dreaming. In order to learn to lucid dream, you must be able to differentiate between what is "reality" and what is a dream. You must develop a questioning awareness. While awake you should be regularly doing "reality checks". There are two parts to a reality check. The first part is asking yourself if you are dreaming or not, and the second part is testing your surroundings to verify if in fact you are dreaming or not.

These reality checks should be done frequently throughout the day. The idea is to engrain this habit into your daily routine so that it will spill over into your dreams. If you practice this consistently, it is just a matter of time until you perform a reality check while dreaming, and if you test your surroundings carefully enough you will realize you are dreaming. In the beginning, I would set the alarm on my wristwatch to go off every half hour as a constant reminder to do my reality checks. Another technique is to write one letter on each hand or wrist and each time you notice the letters you perform a reality check. You could use an L on one and a D on the other to stand for Lucid Dream or B and C for Become Conscious. The letters themselves mean very little. It is remembering to do the reality check that matters, and if this is a method you use regularly, it will surely make its way into your dreams to remind you to question your surroundings.

Asking if you are dreaming is the easy part. The trick is to be able to distinguish whether you are really dreaming or not. One word to sum up your analytical approach would be scrutiny. The idea is to look for strange or illogical things that could only occur if you were dreaming, but sometimes it is hard to tell so scrutinize your whole environment for clues and cues. For example, the idea of pinching yourself to make sure you are not dreaming does not hold that much weight in the dream realm. You may actually feel the pinch in your dream, and this may lead you to believe that you aren't dreaming unless you perform other tests.

For some reason, we are much more accepting and much less analytical of inconsistencies while dreaming so performing multiple reality checks maximizes the odds of becoming lucid if in fact we are dreaming. It is also very helpful to always assume that you are dreaming even if the tests indicate otherwise. You should keep testing and keep trying all of the different reality checks until one works, and only after you have exhausted all options should you conclude that you are not dreaming. From scrutiny to lucidity, you will learn which reality checks work best for you. As you get some experience, you will

see first-hand how important it is to be questioning and persistent, but luckily with all the recent research into lucid dreaming, reality checks are no longer a hit or miss scenario. Many of them show wide-ranging effectiveness among all dreamers.

Here is a list of the most effective reality checks:

1. *The Common Sense Test:* This is the first and most obvious check. Examine your surroundings for anything that should not logically be there. Ask if this could happen in your normal life. Look for inconsistencies. Are you somewhere you have never been before? Are you with people who live on the other side of the country? Is there an elephant in your kitchen? These are the kinds of discrepancies that can spark your lucidity.
2. *The Reading Check*: This is one of the most effective checks. Simply look around and find something to read. After reading it, look away and then look back again to reread it. Do this several times. If you are dreaming, the text or numbers will usually change after several glances. It may become garbled or may have changed completely or it may not remain stable while you are reading it. Anything containing words or numbers will work: a book, a street sign, or an address. Many people use the dial on their dream watch. This is an extremely effective technique and seems to work for the majority of dreamers.
3. *The Flying or Levitation Check*: This is another very effective check. See if you are able to fly. If you are not able to fly, try to levitate or hover slightly above the ground. As you become more skilled at lucid dreaming, this may become your favorite check, as it is mine. The only downside is that at times you may try this and be unable to fly or levitate, yet you still may be dreaming. Always remember to use this in combination with other checks unless of course it immediately works which in most cases it will.
4. *The Light Switch Check*: This is usually a quite reliable check. Find a light switch and turn it on and off. If it malfunctions then the odds are you are dreaming. Try it several times and pay close attention to when it should be on and when it should be off. It usually will not take long before it malfunctions or operates correctly while in the wrong position.
5. *The Memory Check*: This is a very effective but largely unknown method. Simply backtrack in your mind where you have just come from and what you have been doing. Keep thinking back as far as you can and eventually you may find that there are inconsistencies in your memory. By backtracking your dream memory, you may also become aware of something illogical that has happened which you had overlooked at the time. You also may find that you have an amnesia-like block that prevents you from remembering accurately. In all of these cases, you can safely assume that you are dreaming.
6. *The Mirror Check*: This is not only an extremely effective method but as an added bonus, it usually results in quite a remarkable experience. Find a mirror and while gazing at yourself, ask if you are dreaming. You may become startled by your reflection. You may be younger or older or have different hairstyle or different hair color, or you may even be someone different entirely. Any of these inconsistencies would be an obvious indicator that you are in fact dreaming. Plus, if you incorporate this check into your morning routine you will be more likely to transform any of your false awakenings into lucid dreams.
7. *The Self Observation Test*: This is also a very useful check. Just take a look at yourself. Examine your hands, arms, legs, and clothing. Usually you will immediately be tipped off

that are dreaming because you will be wearing clothes that you do not own. Other times, simply looking at your dream body will spark your lucidity.

8. *The Penetration of Matter Check*: This is not the most reliable method but it has helped me on many occasions. Simply try to push your finger through something solid like a wall or a door or a glass. At first, it may not work but if you believe that you can do it, you eventually will be able to pass your finger right through any solid if you are dreaming. As an added bonus on this check, you are also developing your ability to allow your beliefs to directly influence your experience.
9. *The Gravity Check*: This is a somewhat reliable check. Find something that you can throw into the air and catch safely. Start tossing it up and down and you may just find that it isn't obeying the laws of gravity that it should if you were in "reality". To maximize the success of this check, while tossing it into the air try to effect the object's rise and fall with your mind. You could also try jumping up and down to produce the same results.
10. *The Questioning of Dream Characters Check*: This may not be the best thing to try while awake but sometimes it can be effective if in fact you are dreaming. In "reality" if you asked people if we were in a dream, their response would be to accuse you of being insane, yet in the dream realm, it is sometimes a different matter. Usually the dream characters will deny that it is a dream, but they deny it in a strange manner without ever questioning your sanity, and in some cases, they don't even understand what you are saying and disregard you entirely. Most dream characters will deny it is a dream, but the key to this test rests in how they deny it. Also, on rare occasions, someone in your dream will admit that it is in fact a dream.
11. *The Friend Check*: This is a very useful check. Simply perform a reality check whenever you encounter any of your friends during the day. Whether it is your best friend, your mother, or your pet, whenever you see them take a few seconds or as long as needed to determine if you could be dreaming. Since the odds are that you will often have friends in your dreams, this check is very effective as long as you consistently practice it during the day.

As mentioned earlier, these reality checks should be practiced regularly throughout the day. The more they become embedded into your daily routine, the sooner they will appear in your dreams. If there were one word that sums up what you need to develop in order to speed up the lucid dreaming process, it would be *awareness*. Working on your awareness will have direct carryover effects into your dreams, and once you become more skilled at lucid dreaming you will realize that your awareness combined with your intent is your passport into the dream realm.

Step Six) Linking your Awareness to your Dreams

This last step is rather simple and easy compared to the previous steps, and due to its simplicity you

should have no problem incorporating it into your daily regime. But before we move on, let's review where you should be at right now. At this point, you have done the mental prep-work, you have been increasing your dream recall, and you have been keeping your dream journal. You are becoming familiar with your dreams, noticing your dreamsigns, and exercising your awareness by meditating and doing your reality checks consistently.

The final step is to combine what you have learned about your dreams with what you have learned about your awareness. Put simply, you need to merge your reality checks with your dreamsigns so that whenever you encounter one of your dreamsigns you automatically start doing reality checks. If you dream of classrooms or beaches or driving fast in a car, whenever you see a classroom or a beach or whenever you are driving in a fast car you will be programmed to do a reality check. The end result will be this: Inevitably you are going to dream about one of your dreamsigns (that is why they are your dreamsigns) and eventually you are going to remember to do a reality check and ultimately you are going to realize that you are dreaming.

It is helpful to stay updated on your current dreamsigns and dream themes. If you have been having dreams of being chased for the past week, you need to activate a trigger onto the idea of being chased so that whenever you are being chased you will realize that you need to do a reality check. By becoming intimately acquainted with your dreamsigns and linking reality checks to these dreamsigns, you will be laying the foundation for future lucid dreaming adventures.

As you can see, these six steps are all interwoven into one basic process. Leaving out just one step will diminish the effectiveness of all the other steps, and in turn, it will decrease the actual results of the entire process. Almost all of the other techniques and methods for inducing lucid dreams that will be mentioned are based on this overall process to a certain extent. Often, the methods and techniques are offshoots of this process or are limited versions of one or more of these six basic steps. Study them and internalize them. Practice them diligently and consistently and your subconscious will become engrained with them. Eventually these habits will carry over into your dreams, and hopefully the final payoff will be when you say, "Yes, I am dreaming!"

By simply following these six steps, you will inevitably have a lucid dream, but to maximize your progress, let's go over several other methods that you can use in conjunction with these six steps. By experimenting with these steps and with the following methods, you will discover which techniques work best for you.

OTHER METHODS:

There are many methods to induce lucid dreams. Some are more effective than others, but luckily you can start by incorporating several different methods into your daily routine. This will maximize your results and over time you can determine which approaches are best suited for your lifestyle. The following list contains all of the effective methods that I have encountered, and I have personally experimented with each one to ensure that they are worth learning and practicing. By following the Six Basic Steps and adding these methods to your daily routine, you will be having lucid dreams in no time.

Here is a list of methods and techniques commonly used to induce lucid dreams...

Utilizing the Hypnagogic/Hypnapompic States: This method is so important that it almost transcends being labeled a method. Hypnagogic and hypnapompic states are just fancy names for the period of time right before you fall asleep and the period of time directly after awakening from sleep, respectively. If you have ever stayed awake and momentarily had a real quick dream and then flashed right out of it, then you are already somewhat familiar with this altered state of mind. When you are in a hypnagogic state your body is slowly shutting itself down for the night. Chemical processes are occurring which slowly demobilize your body for the night so you don't actually swing your arms in your bed just because you are swinging them in your dreams. While dreaming, your eyes are a few of the only body parts that remain mobile as we mentioned earlier when discussing REM sleep. Not only does your body shut down due to this process of sleep paralysis, but due to the lack of external stimulation, your mind starts to go through changes as well.

As you approach the threshold between waking and sleeping, your brainwaves slow down from a waking bustling beta through a relaxing alpha and into a highly visual theta. Once you have entered into the theta zone you are experiencing hypnagogia as you teeter at the edge of full sleep mode. After awakening from a dream you still have a predominance of theta as long as you don't flood yourself with external thoughts of your daily plans and concerns. These kinds of thoughts will draw you into a beta mind-state like a brainwave fire alarm sparking the mind to "get with it". This is why you need to wake slowly and not let your daily concerns flood your mind upon awakening. Whether you are about to fall asleep or just awakening, the idea is to try and remain in that hypnagogic state of mind for as long as you can. These in-between regions, these borderline zones, will be the ideal place to practice your induction methods.

How do you get there? Well, that is as easy as staying awake and observing yourself as you fall asleep. You need to become familiar with how your body and mind shut down at the end of each night. Some people fall asleep instantly as their heads hit their pillows. If you are one of these people you need to be more vigilant and make an extra effort to remain more aware of your shutdown routine. It is crucial to take advantage of this perfect practice ground because every night and usually every morning you get another chance to utilize it. So every night you can engrain your new routine of exploring this realm into your daily habit. Repetition makes results in the lucid dreaming realm. Eventually you can advance to the point where your body falls asleep but your mind stays awake. You then can maintain your consciousness all the way through the threshold. I cannot describe how strange it was when I first experienced this mind awake/body asleep state. I remember hearing loud snoring noises, and then to my utmost surprise, I realized that the snoring was coming from me. Directly entering into a lucid dream, a W.I.L.D., is one of the ultimate lucid dreaming experiences. We'll devote a whole section to inducing W.I.L.D.s when we cover advanced techniques, but let's get back to hypnagogia.

How do you know when you are there? When you are in a hypnagogic state there are many characteristics about this state that you will notice. For example, you will become less aware of your physical body and more attuned to the random thoughts that drift through your mind. You may even have no sense of your body at all. Your consciousness is detaching from the physical as your body shuts down for its nightly rest. You will also experience increased visualization abilities. Colors, forms, and imagery will flash across your mind's eye. This is an ideal setting for practicing your visualization skills. While in a hypnagogic state, you may even hear voices, music or other realistic noises that are not coming from

your bedroom. It is this drowsy, detached state of awareness that is the perfect practice grounds for testing out all the different methods of inducing lucid dreams. You are much more open to suggestion in this mind state, and as a result, your induction techniques have much greater chance of becoming engrained into your subconscious and producing the desired results.

Take advantage of your voyage through the hypnagogic state and remember to use it as one of your target practice grounds. Every morning right when you awaken you get a chance to utilize the hypnapompic state which is an identical twin mind state that takes place immediately upon awakening. These wonderful mind states with their predominance of theta brainwaves have been used throughout the ages by many brilliant thinkers. The presence of theta brainwaves usually indicates highly visual and holistic thought processing. Einstein commented that this was a perfect time for him to conceptualize and visualize his groundbreaking ideas. It is not so surprising that those Eureka flashes, those moments of sublime creativity, often occur right on the border between sleep and wakefulness when we are far more receptive to our subconscious reservoir of insight.

The MILD Technique: Mnemonic Induction of Lucid Dreams*:* This technique was developed by Stephen LaBerge. Due to his pioneering scientific work and his on-going research into the field of lucid dreaming, much light has been shed on the topic over the past few decades. This technique is widely used by most lucid dreamers and consistently produces great results.

For a more in-depth discussion of this technique, I suggest referring to both of LaBerge's books because they are loaded with useful information. Assuming that the desire to have a lucid dream is strongly in place, here is a basic summary of LaBerge's *MILD Technique*.

1. *Set up dream recall*: Before going to bed, establish the desire and intent to recall your dreams.
2. *Recall your dreams*: Upon awakening, no matter what time it is, recall your dreams in as much detail as possible. If you are drowsy, do something to prevent you from falling back asleep.
3. *Focus your Intent*: While returning to sleep, concentrate single-mindedly on your intention to realize that you are dreaming. Say to yourself, "The next time I am dreaming, I want to remember that I'm dreaming." Say this over and over until it is the last thing on your mind before falling asleep.
4. *See yourself becoming lucid*: Imagine yourself back in the dream from which you have just awakened, but this time recognize you are dreaming. Find a dreamsign; when you see it say to yourself, "I'm dreaming" and continue your fantasy.
5. *Repeat*: Repeat steps 3 and 4. Until your intention is set, then let yourself fall asleep. If your thoughts stray from this idea, bring your mind back to your intention to remember.

As mentioned, *the MILD Technique* is extremely effective. It is best practiced in the morning when you are in your target time zone. You can use it at any time throughout the night, but it is especially effective after directly awakening from a dream. This technique operates much like a self-hypnosis script. It addresses the difficulty involved when trying to remember to become lucid within a dream. It makes use of the power of recency by holding your awareness on steps 3 and 4 until you fall asleep. By having these as the last thoughts in your mind, you will increase the odds of having these thoughts in your next dream. The hardest part is remembering to question yourself while you are dreaming, but by using *the MILD technique,* you will have much greater likelihood of crossing the lucid barrier.

The "Counting" Method: This method is somewhat similar to the MILD technique. They both use the power of repetition and recency. Using *the Counting Technique*, you count yourself to bed by saying, "One, I'm dreaming. Two, I'm dreaming. Three, I'm dreaming, etc…". If your mind wanders from your counting, gently bring it back. Try to remain focused so that it is the last thing on your mind before drifting off to sleep. If only we were taught this method as children instead of counting sheep, we would probably all be advanced lucid dreamers. By counting yourself into sleep, you can get a good idea of how long it takes for you to fall asleep. Ideally, you will be able to know how close to sleep you actually are depending on how high you have counted or how long you have been counting, and this will come in handy when we discuss some other methods.

You can also experiment to find out which style of counting works best for you. You could count up to ten and then back, or count down from one hundred, or whatever feels most comfortable to you. The style of counting is not nearly as important as the process of engraining the idea, focusing your intent and exercising your awareness.

Tibetan dream yogis were extremely skilled dreamers and masters at manipulating their awareness. They would use this counting technique to enter a lucid dream state without ever losing consciousness. Even if you fall a little short of directly entering a lucid dream, this method is still very effective at inducing lucid dreams especially when charged by desire and used during your target time zone.

The "Questioning" Method: This method is basically the same as *the Counting Method*, but instead of counting, you question yourself to sleep by repeatedly asking, "Am I dreaming? Am I dreaming?" The repetition helps to deeply embed the question into your mind. Having this question as your last thought before falling asleep increases the odds that you will ask yourself this same question while you are dreaming.

The "Looking for your Hands" Method: This method will definitely come in handy, literally. It is very similar to Step Six, linking your awareness to your dreamsigns. For this method, you need to activate a link between "looking at your hands" and realizing that you are dreaming. You need to develop a strong intent to look for and find your hands while you are in a dream. During the day, you should look at your hands and perform reality checks to determine if you are or are not dreaming. You will train yourself to equate seeing your hands with performing reality checks until it becomes an automatic reaction. Eventually, you will have a dream in which you see your hands. Upon seeing your hands, you should then perform a reality check and realize that you are dreaming.

This method was mentioned in the books of another prolific lucid dreamer, Carlos Castaneda. His books contain accounts of his experiences as an apprentice to Don Juan, a Yaqui "man of knowledge". Regardless of the controversy over whether or not these books are fact or fiction, his books do contain an overflowing amount of wisdom, insight, and practical applications for expanding both your belief systems and your awareness. Don Juan gave Carlos the task of looking for his hands to teach him the process of "dreaming awake" which could loosely be described as lucid dreaming used as a means to develop one's sorceric abilities and to gain access to other realms of "non-ordinary reality". Whatever goals you attempt to achieve by lucid dreaming, you may find this method may lend a helping hand by sparking your lucidity.

Although he advised looking for hands, Don Juan also made a point to say that there was no magical secret to finding the hands in particular. You could look for your feet or your face and the results would

be the same as long as you used an unbending intent to trigger yourself into realizing you are dreaming when you see the activated object. Hands were probably chosen because they are easy to see and because they are present in most of your dreams.

"The Lettered Hands" Method: This method was mentioned when we discussed reality checks. In keeping with the hands motif, this method has multiple benefits. By writing one letter on the back of each hand or wrist you train yourself to do reality checks every time you notice the letters on your wrist. You could have an L on your left hand and a D on your right hand to stand for lucid dream, but as mentioned the letters you choose are not important. The important thing is engraining the process until it becomes habit. This method has an added bonus because you can get the benefits of one of the most effective reality checks, *the reading reality check*. When you notice your lettered wrists while dreaming you can glance at the letters on your wrists and then do a few double takes to make sure the letters remain stable and unchanged. If they have switched positions or if they have become smaller, you can safely conclude that you are dreaming..

"Thirst Induced" Lucid Dream: I can't recommend practicing this one consistently, but the idea is to go to bed very thirsty. Before going to bed, you activate a dream trigger on the idea of drinking. You simply link the idea of drinking with the need to perform a reality check. Hopefully, you will dream of drinking and this will spark your lucidity. This method definitely shows some results, the odds are fairly high that you will in fact dream of drinking, but as I mentioned, it is probably not the best idea to be going to bed extremely thirsty every night. Water is important, and as a matter of fact, it plays a big role in the next method.

"Bathroom Induced" Lucidity: This is basically the opposite of the thirst-induced method. Drink ample amounts of water and go to bed filled with water, but this time link a dream trigger to going to the bathroom. When you feel the urge to use the bathroom in your dream, hopefully your bathroom-activated dreamsign will cause you to become lucid. The good side to this is that you will almost inevitably have a dream in which you have to go to the bathroom so the odds are great that your dreamsign will appear. The bad side though is that if you do become lucid you may realize all too soon that your urge to use the bathroom was a real one, and this impulse may bring your lucid dream to an early end.

"The Grounding your Awareness in your Room" Method: The idea with this method is to thoroughly engrain the fact that you are lying in bed. Open your eyes and look around your room. Become aware of your exact position in the room. Ground your awareness right where you are and realize that you are going to sleep. Internalize the fact that if anything happens which does not take place in your room then you must be dreaming. This is especially effective because it engrains a questioning attitude in your mind and it can be used in combination with any other techniques. As mentioned before, if you assume that anything that happens is a dream, you are that much more likely to assume this while in a dream.

The only trick with this method is that you may start dreaming that you are lying in bed. As a matter of fact, you may very well dream that you are not dreaming, and just lying in your bed. This phenomenon is very similar to a false awakening where you have a dream that you wake up but in fact you just have awakened into another dream. We will cover this in much greater detail in a different section. Using this technique definitely requires being aware and extremely questioning. Even though it may increase your number of false awakenings, once you become familiar with false awakenings they serve as excellent starting points for lucid dreams so using this technique will have additional payoffs when you begin to transform your false awakenings into lucid dreams.

The Alarm Clock Method: This method was mentioned earlier as a way to increase your dream recall, and it can also be used as a method to induce lucid dreams. By waking at odd hours throughout the night or waking before you normally would or by using the snooze button method, you can use these planned awakenings as a chance to practice your lucid dream induction methods. This is an ideal way to ensure that you will practice your MILD technique, grounding your awareness, or whatever methods you are using to induce a lucid dream.

The Wake/Back to Bed Method: I saved the best technique for last. This is the most potent method because you can use it along with any other methods and it simply outperforms all the rest. Using this method, you will increase your odds of having a lucid dream *exponentially*, and the more you use it, the better it will work.

Here's the method...

1. *Go to bed for six hours or so.* The exact timing does not have to be precise. The idea is to get enough sleep so that you are in your REM-maximized target time zone. As long as you have slept approximately six hours, your body will be thoroughly rested and you will be having consistently elongated periods of REM which will make inducing lucidity that much easier.
2. *Wake up and get out of bed.* It is crucial that you get out of bed to increase

   your odds of success. Many attempts will be thwarted by thinking you don't need to get out of bed. Without getting vertical, so to speak, you will not be awake enough for the method to work properly. You need to be fully awake

   before returning to bed. If you are still drowsy and sleepy-headed when you

   go back to bed, you are not properly following the method, and your results

   will reflect it.
3. *Stay awake for almost an hour.* The idea is to fall asleep between sixty and ninety minutes from when you originally awakened. This will synchronize the timing of you falling asleep with your next naturally occurring REM cycle. It would be a good idea to write down all the dreams you can remember for the night. Reading a book about lucid dreams or reading your dream journal is also a great thing to do during this interim period. Experiment with the time you spend awake to determine which timing works best. Depending on how quickly you fall asleep, you will want to make adjustments. If you are quick to fall asleep then you should stay up longer, and vice versa.

   I sometimes take a while to fall asleep especially after becoming fully awake, but I find that even if I stay up for an hour, and take a half hour to fall asleep, I will still have great results. I can still have good results by staying up for only twenty minutes since it takes me a while to fall asleep, but it seems, to me at least, that the closer to an hour that I stay awake before going back to bed, the better the results. There may be individual variations on the timing so experiment with it yourself to see if you can still have good results even if you shorten the waking interval to less than the recommended hour.
4. *Go back to bed using whatever technique* you normally use to induce your lucid dreams. You can use any of the methods outlined in this book: the MILD technique, counting,

questioning, grounding your awareness, or whatever methods you choose.

One key thing is to "set the pattern" by establishing a routine of using this *Sleep/Wake/Back to Bed Method* regularly. I had been using this method sporadically for some time, but once I buckled down and made it a priority, the results were phenomenal. By the end of the third week, I had almost a fifty-percent chance of successfully inducing a lucid dream. I even had a record breaking twenty-five lucid dreams in one week using this exact method. I have yet to top that one, and even though I don't view lucid dreaming as some kind of competition, it certainly makes you ecstatic when you are lucid nearly every night.

So I think the key is to be consistent and get the routine engrained and absorbed into your subconscious. With time it seems to be getting easier and easier, and as a bonus effect of all this induced lucidity you can expect to have extra spontaneous lucid dreams during the night. This is by far the best technique for inducing lucid dreams and it should be used regularly by anyone who wants to give his or her lucid dreaming a serious jumpstart.

VIII. BEGINNING TIPS, TACTICS AND TOOLS

Here is a list of tips that can help you speed up the lucid dreaming process...

**Take care of your waking life*. Since your dreams are often strongly influenced by your waking experience, it is a great idea to start taking an active role in living as well as dreaming. To take control of your dreams, you must take control of your life, your thoughts, and your actions. If you lead a scattered life then your dreams may reflect a scattered nature. If you aren't aware during the day you have less chance of being able to do so while sleeping. If you don't follow through with your plans while awake, you will rarely do so while asleep. Use your dreams and your progress with lucid dreaming as a gauge to determine how well you are taking care of both your waking and dreaming life.

**Take care of yourself in general.* If you have an unhealthy lifestyle, the time to change it has come. If you smoke, get little sleep, and eat poorly, your dreaming may suffer. Smoking and alcohol can reduce the absorption of oxygen in your body and decrease the amino acid production, and this may result in impaired dreaming. Imagine your body as a dynamic association of many different factors. Your thoughts are influenced by your health, yet your health is also influenced by your thoughts. Many factors are mutually influencing each other to create the person you refer to as you. By placing emphasis on being healthy and taking care of both your body and mind, you are creating a more efficient you, a symbiotically enhanced you.

Keeping active both physically and mentally is a great idea. This type of stimulation is perfect food for future dreams. After a day filled with action you are more likely to have a night filled with dreams. Also, with dreams being so predominantly filled with movement and action, getting some action during the day will often boost your dreaming at night.

**Take supplements if you daily intake is lacking*. Certain vitamins, minerals, proteins, and amino acids play an active role in dreaming. If you have an unbalanced diet, you may want to consider taking vitamin

supplements. Since dreaming consists of electrical and chemical reactions taking place in your brain, it would certainly be wise to make sure that you have the necessary building blocks. Just as a car runs more efficiently when all the fluids are checked and filled, you should be aware of what you are putting into your body or what you are lacking to maximize your performance.

During REM sleep there is an increase in protein synthesis. Since amino acids are the building blocks of protein, we need to pay attention to what affects our amino acids and to what aids our neurotransmitters while we are dreaming. Acetylcholine is one of the prominent brain chemicals, or neurotransmitters, associated with dreaming. It can be metabolized by our body in a number of ways, and choline plays an important role in this transformation.

Also, as we get ready to go to bed at night, our body begins to increase the production of melatonin, a neurotransmitter that acts like a natural sedative. Melatonin is linked to seratonin, and seratonin has been linked not only to dreaming but also to surges of positive emotions and intensely pleasurable sensations.

There is still a lot to be learned about the dreaming process, and the preceding overview is meant to give you a brief understanding of the process. It involves proteins, amino acids, vitamins, minerals, and nutrients. From what is currently known, we can safely assume that the following list of supplements will probably enhance the dreaming process especially if your diet lacks them. As with any other change in your dietary intake it would be wise to consult with your physician or local nutritionist before making any drastic alterations in your usual routine.

Here is a list of supplements that have been linked to dreaming:

1. **Choline:** By taking a supplement of choline, you make it easier for your brain to synthesize acetylcholine. Choline also plays an active role in maintaining a healthy nervous system. Supplements of **lecithin** also will do the trick because lecithin is a natural source of choline. **DMAE (Dimethylaminoethanol)** is also a good source of choline as well as being highly permeable so it can easily pass through the brain's membrane where it is converted into choline.
1. **B vitamins: B-6 and B-12** have been reported to cause more vivid dreams and increased recall as well. They also help maintain the nervous system. **B-6** plays a big role in the production of certain amino acids, proteins, and neurotransmitters involved in the dreaming process. **B-12** influences the activation of amino acids during protein synthesis, and since there is an increase in protein synthesis while dreaming, this most likely will increase levels of acetylcholine. **Niacin,** also referred to as **B-3,** has been noted to increase the production of seratonin that will in turn increase the production of melatonin. In order to properly assimilate them and maximize their effectiveness, it is a good idea to take them along with a **B-complex** supplement. The B vitamins also help maintain the nervous system and help convert food into energy.
2. **Potassium:** Potassium also plays a role in dreaming. It may help provide the nutritive support for maintaining a healthy electrolyte balance and aid in nerve and muscle function. Getting potassium can be as easy as eating a banana before bed, and if you don't have a banana then a supplement just might do the trick.

3. **Vitamin C:** Vitamin C has so many benefits it should be taken regardless of its correlation to dreaming. It is an anti-oxidant that also helps in the production of many amino acids. It is also water-soluble so there is little danger in taking too much. A good timed release 500mg Vitamin C in the morning and one at night always seems to do the trick for me.
4. **Zinc:** Zinc plays a crucial role in the production of many amino acids. Having a good reserve of zinc helps be prepared for the increase in protein synthesis found during the REM period.
5. **Melatonin:** You can take a melatonin supplement. Many people have had good results with it and claim that it increases their recall and increases the vividness of their dreams. I have experienced very little effects when taking it, and sometimes it makes me feel a little groggy in the morning, but some people have reported different results.
6. **Herbal Supplements:** Here is a list of other herbal supplements that supposedly aid in dreaming. I must note at this point that I have not tried all of these supplements so I don't have an exact opinion as to their effectiveness. If I have tried them they have showed little discernable differences in my dreaming, but there are many who have been aided by them. Some come in supplement form and others are available as tea. Some of these supplements are: Calea Zacatechichi, St. Johns Wort, Valerian Root, Ginkgo Biloba, Gotu Kola, Kava Kava, Bee Pollen, and Licorice Root.

You can still have lucid dreams without the aid of these supplements, but I am always a firm believer in hedging your odds. Plus, all of these supplements are beneficial to your system so it definitely wouldn't hurt to incorporate them into your daily routine. I take a multi-vitamin supplement, choline, potassium, B-vitamins, and plenty of Vitamin C every day, and I think it contributes not only to my nightly dreaming excursions but also to my overall health and wellbeing.

**Have a consistent sleeping pattern.* By going to bed and waking at the same time each day, you will have a more stable sleeping pattern. When you are training yourself to become lucid, it will help to have a stable, consistent sleeping pattern because this habit can aid in the forming of other beneficial habits. For example, if you already have habitual sleeping times, then you will already have a firmly engrained target time zone. With time and practice you will engrain the habit of practicing your methods of induction during these times, and your habitual sleeping pattern will now have an added practical element embedded within it. Your sleeping habits are extremely important because they lay the foundation for your overall practice. Your body and your mind will soon recognize certain time periods as being lucid dream-related, and with this subconscious realization you will be more likely to succeed in your induction attempts during these time periods.

The process of lucid dreaming is largely a process of developing new habits. If you already have existing habits, it is a good idea to incorporate them into your daily lucid dreaming regime unless of course they are habits that need to be changed. It is an art of developing new rituals and new habits that will train your awareness to become lucid while dreaming. The more consistent you are, the more likely you are to succeed, and your sleeping pattern is a great place to begin.

**Get plenty of sleep*. Since most dreams occur in the last few hours of sleep, this time period is your

target time zone. You should be taking advantage of these REM-intensive hours. If you miss out on the last few hours of sleep, you will have fewer dreams for the night and less opportunities to become lucid. Lucid dreaming is one skill where oversleeping has its advantages.

**Read as much as you can on the subject*. Reading everything you can on the subject will saturate your mind with lucid dreaming. By surrounding yourself with lucid dream-related activities, you will soon be surrounded by lucid dream-related dreams. It is the carryover effect at its finest. Many times while reading or right after finishing a book on lucid dreaming, I will have lucid dreams directly attributed to the book. In most cases, some scene or some dream object will remind me of the book and of lucid dreaming. Once I notice this, I will do a reality check and become lucid. Once you become saturated with the idea of lucid dreaming, you will start having dreams in which you are telling others in the dream about lucid dreaming. Even if you don't become lucid, you are getting that much closer.

There are many excellent books on the subject, and there is a rather substantial recommended reading list in **Appendix II**. There are also many sources of information available on the Internet including free online books, articles, and archives all related to lucid dreaming, but we will cover this later when dealing with the Internet. With so much good reading available on the subject you should have no problem keeping your mind thoroughly saturated.

**Remind yourself of your plan*. The importance of having a plan, goal, or mission

in your next lucid dream is often under-emphasized. By engraining your plan into your mind and charging it with a desire to accomplish it, you will have more focus and better results. While you are doing your reality checks during the day, it is a great idea to include your mission. After you have done your check, reflect on what you would have done once you realized that you were dreaming.

This habit will have a carryover effect that will make it easier to remember what

to do once you become lucid. Remembering your mission is not as easy as it may sound. Upon becoming lucid, the euphoric rush often will cause you to forget any missions that you had planned so it helps considerably to engrain your plan or mission throughout the day.

**Release any waking stress and negativity.* Before falling asleep at night, get in

the habit of cleansing your mind of daily stress, worries, insecurities, and any other negatively based thoughtforms. The idea is to never go to bed before resolving all your daily issues. You may not be able to totally resolve some issues, but you can consciously decide to put aside any disturbing issues until awakening. If you have a grievance with someone, forgive them and release the negative energy you are holding. If you have a dilemma that needs resolving, ask for workable solutions to appear in your dreams. Whatever your issues may be, by finding and addressing them, you will have less negativity carryover into your dreams.

This practice has a multitude of benefits. It creates a pattern of examining your

daily life to determine where energy blockages are occurring. It creates a habit of taking an active role in resolving your issues. It allows you to direct your dreams and make them work for you. Instead of being reflections of your daily stress, your dreams can become a source for inspiration and guidance. Most importantly, it puts you face to face with the realization that you are ultimately in control of your own thoughts, and your thoughts influence what you experience. This will increase your control of both your

waking and dreaming states.

**Recall and recap your day*. Again, before falling asleep, reflect upon everything

that happened to you from the moment you woke up in the morning. Recall in as much detail as possible all the activities, thoughts, and emotions you experienced during that day. Start from your most recent memories and work backwards until you retrace your day all the way back to the moment you became conscious that morning. If you have trouble recapping your day, ask question like "How did I get there?" and "What did I think about that?" and "How did that make me feel?" These questions can add depth to your overall recap and help you learn about yourself at the same time.

The effects of this practice like the previous one are numerous, and you can

maximize your results by using both methods together. You should recap your day and then *release any waking stress and negativity* related to it. This practice has many of the benefits of the previous method plus a few unique ones of its own. First, it exercises and strengthens your memory. Becoming better at recalling your day will also result in better dream recall. Secondly, it makes you become more conscious of your awareness. If you have foggy recall of your day then it is safe to assume that your level of awareness was low during the day. Thirdly, this habit of mental backtracking will begin to carry over into your dreams. If you mentally backtrack while in a dream, you may just find something illogical that will spark your lucidity. Plus, with practice this strengthening of your memory and your awareness will make you more fully conscious and more fully aware in the existing moment. This form of grounding of your awareness will be very important when we discuss the ways to prolong and maintain your lucidity while dreaming.

**Reward yourself for dreaming*. Never underestimate the power of positive

reinforcement. A little celebration of your dreaming successes can go a long way. It is a good idea to have a set of goals written down somewhere in your dream journal. You could set a goal to remember one dream a night for a week or maybe your goal could be to find your hands while in a dream. Set your goals however big or small and then find some way of rewarding yourself whenever you accomplish one of your goals. The idea is to celebrate your progress and accelerate it at the same time. This makes the whole learning process more fun and creates a positive approach. It also helps keep your progress in perspective by allowing you to see how far you have come and where you plan on going.

**Utilize the hypnagogic and the hypnapompic states*. As mentioned, these

borderlands between waking and sleeping are excellent times for practicing your methods and exercising you awareness in general. It is a perfect time for setting your intent, using autosuggestion, developing your visualization skills, and lots more. Taking full advantage of these in-between states is so important that we will spend an entire section on them when dealing with the terrain. For now, it will suffice to say that these borderlands will initially serve as perfect practicing grounds, and at more advanced levels, you can use them as direct gateways into the dream realm.

**Use simple affirmations and a semi-detached approach*. The power of

suggestion is a valuable tool when dealing with your awareness. For example, many nights before going to bed I will just say to myself, "Tonight is the night I become lucid". Without giving it another thought I will go to bed and become lucid at some point in the night. Sometimes the simplest of thoughts produce

remarkable results. If you find you are trying many different methods and having little results over a long period, try something more simple or back off for a little while. After you have your intent and your desire focused on having a lucid dream, sometimes they will come to you as soon as you ease up and just allow them to occur.

All methods will work best when used with a certain degree of detachment. The idea is to induce a lucid dream not to force one. If you are attempting to force one, you may actually be pushing them away and keeping them just out of your reach. This is a natural process that need not be forced. A delicate and loose handling of your attachment to lucid dreaming will create better results. The idea is to open yourself to the experience, take the steps to develop new habits, and then simply allow it to happen.

**Expect positive results*. A lot has been mentioned about your intent and your desire, but your expectations are crucial to your success. Being rooted in your belief systems, your expectation can help or hinder your progress tremendously. Even if you have your intent and desire firmly in place and even if you are practicing diligently, subconscious blocks can arise if you have mixed expectations. To solve this problem, check in with yourself regularly to monitor your expectations. Be honest with yourself because saying you expect positive results and actually having positive expectations are two separate things. We will go over the power of expectation again when we deal with controlling your lucid dreams.

DREAMING TOOLS :

In our technological society, there seems to be tools, gadgets, and supplementary aids for everything, and lucid dreaming has its fair share as well. A few products are tailored specifically for lucid dreaming, but most of them are crossover products from other fields running the gamut from meditational aids to ear plugs. These crossover products are geared towards exercising and maintaining your awareness, and awareness as we know is the magic key that opens the door to lucid dreaming. Some of the tools could be likened to training wheels. You could learn how to ride a bike without them, but with them it is much easier, and you can eventually take them off after you learn how to ride by yourself.

Although there are many tools that you can use, there is only one tool that is absolutely required, the human brain. Luckily, this one necessity is free, and the more you use it and upgrade it, the better it gets. This tool weighs in at about six pounds yet it contains a universe of potential. Once conditioned with the appropriate mental habits, your brain and your mind will be the ultimate tools for fulfilling your lucid dreaming agenda, but there are some tools that can speed up your progress along the way.

Here are some lucid dreaming related tools…

The best source for lucid dreaming tools without a doubt is *The Lucidity Institute*. In the Appendix you

will find information on how to receive a free catalog of their products. They offer a variety of devices including the ultimate product on any lucid dreamer's wish list, the ***NovaDreamer***.

The NovaDreamer is a sleep mask that you wear to bed. It detects eye movements to determine when you are in REM sleep. Once REM is detected, it flashes light and/or sound cues to trigger you into realizing that you are dreaming. You can adjust the intensity, duration, style, and combination of the cues to find what works best for you. If you are a deep sleeper you can set the light and sound cues at a higher intensity than a light sleeper would use. With a little practice, you will become trained to look for these light and sound cues as your dreamsigns, and once you notice these cues you will realize that you are dreaming.

In the beginning when I had less ability to induce and sustain my lucid dreams, the NovaDreamer was an extremely valuable tool, and it still comes in handy to this day. My first few months of training myself to lucid dream produced decent results, but with the added support from the NovaDreamer, my progress accelerated in leaps and bounds. As soon as I progressed to a certain level, I only used it when I was having a dry spell so I would not develop a dependency on it. After removing my training wheels, the skills I had developed while using it were still there, and I could induce and ride out my lucid dreams without it.

The more acquainted and comfortable you become with your lucid dreams, the easier it is to repeat them and to prolong them. By using the NovaDreamer, you can increase the likelihood of becoming lucid and this will lead to more lucid dreams. To this day if I am having a dry spell, I will don it once more, and within a week I will have a lucid dream usually in the morning using the Sleep-Wake-Back to Bed Method. Purchasing a NovaDreamer is a wise investment especially if you are not an avid dreamer. Once you develop you may not need it anymore, but it's still there as a back-up tool, and it was certainly helpful along the way. I highly recommend getting one, but as I mentioned earlier, you can definitely learn to lucid dream without one, but as far as "training wheels" go, this one will certainly speed you along your path.

Recently, The Lucidity Institute has developed an attachment, *the Super NovaDreamer* package. It interfaces into the NovaDreamer and connects it to your home computer. Using the included software, you can use the NovaDreamer as a biofeedback system to record and analyze your own unique sleeping and dreaming cycles. It stores each night's dream data such as how often and when you were detected in REM, and the information can be stored as files on your computer for future analysis. Just as analyzing your dream journal helps understand your dream content, using the Super NovaDreamer interface allows you to overview your experience with the NovaDreamer to maximize your results. More importantly, it allows you to pinpoint your own individualized target time zone.

Another device, *the DreamSpeaker*, can also be attached to the NovaDreamer. Using this attachment a pre-recorded message will play whenever the flash and/or sound cues are delivered during your sleep. Hearing your own voice as it instructs you to become lucid really can help increase the odds of becoming lucid. For more information about this and some other useful products from The Lucidity Institute, you can refer to the Appendix.

Books, Tapes, and Lucid Dreaming Kits: If you check your local bookstore, you can find many books on lucid dreaming, and if you look in the audio-section of most of the larger retail bookstores, you may find lucid dreaming cassette tapes. Some are guided hypnotic voyages aimed at inducing lucid dreams. Others use subliminal suggestion to embed the idea into your subconscious. Some will even embed brainwave

frequencies into the cassette to maximize the effects. The idea of entraining your brainwaves to particular frequencies is important, and we will cover it in more detail when take a look at the meditational devices. Some of the tapes are a combination of these approaches. There are even a few lucid dreaming kits available, but from those that I have researched, everything they mention has been or will be covered in this book. If you are the type of person who gets better results by using a workbook then you may want to look into getting a lucid dreaming kit. Not surprisingly, I would recommend the Course in Lucid Dreaming offered by The Lucidity Institute. It is rather comprehensive and has better structure and format than most of the other kits.

Here are some lucid dreaming tools that you can make yourself...

Making your own sleep tapes. If you have a cassette tape player/recorder with auto-reverse and continuous play capabilities, you can make your own tapes and play them back to yourself while you are sleeping. If you do not have a radio recorder with these capabilities, you can purchase one for as little as forty dollars. Making the tapes is very simple. To do this, start recording on a blank tape. Allow it to record and every five minutes or so, you can say something like, "I am dreaming. This is a lucid dream." When you play it back using an auto-reverse continuous play mode. It will loop over and over and play all night long giving you time-released cues every five minutes or so.

You can tailor your recordings to your needs. You can remind yourself of what you plan to accomplish. You can create a tape that has guided imagery on it and instructions to become lucid. After you have created the tape or tapes, play them back at a low but audible level, and go to bed. This can be a very effective way of becoming lucid. It also helps engrain the idea of becoming lucid into your subconscious since you will be listening to it all night long regardless of whether you consciously hear it or not.

Using a timer outlet. A timer outlet is a device that plugs into an outlet and allows you to set specific times to turn on or off any appliances plugged into the timer. Just as you use your alarm clock as a tool, a timer outlet can be used to play your sleep tapes at particular times. For example, you can set your tape player to play between one and two a.m. if you have been waking and recalling dreams at that time. You could set it to start playing after you have been asleep for several hours to maximize the odds of being in REM and to allow you to fall asleep without it distracting you if you have a hard time falling asleep with the tape playing in the background. There are even multi-timer outlets that allow you to set several on/off periods so you can experiment with the settings as you learn more about your sleeping cycle.

Other awareness tools…

Because lucid dreaming is a skill that requires a certain degree of mental control, it is a great idea to exercise and strengthen our awareness. As noted earlier, meditation helps increase our lucid dreaming skills. By meditating, one directly interacts with his or her thoughts and learns to have a certain degree of control over them, and conversely, one can practice developing a certain level of detachment to his or her thoughts by just allowing them to flow undisturbed. The ability to control your thoughts will have direct benefits once you become lucid in a dream, and the ability to remain loosely detached from your thoughts will make direct entry into a lucid dream that much easier. By working with yourself to discover how you think and how your awareness operates, you will be developing an awareness that is capable of clueing you in to the "reality" that you are dreaming.

Before listing the tools that can be used to exercise your mind and strengthen your awareness, it may be a

good idea to review some of the brainwave information we covered earlier. By applying what we know about our brainwaves, how they operate, and how they can be influenced by modern technology, we will gain a better overview of how some new revolutionary tools can be used to directly influence our mental states.

Brainwaves Revisited…

Our brain produces waves of currents that flow throughout its neural pathways. Oscillating pulses and patterns of neural excitations ripple through our brains much like never-ending waves in a dynamic pond of subtle electrical matter. The type of brainwave is defined by the frequency at which it is pulsing, and the particular rate of pulsation determines our respective state of mind. As mentioned, there are four basic types of brainwave patterns (beta, alpha, theta, delta), but due to the complexity of our brains there are often several patterns interacting at one time. It is the predominance of one particular brainwave frequency that determines our state of mind. For example, if you are in a beta state, there may be trace levels of alpha and theta but they would minimal compared to the dominating amount of beta present.

These brainwave states have been examined, charted, experimented with, and we are learning more and more about how these states can be summoned and harnessed to create certain states of mind. For example, when you begin to relax your brainwaves begin to slow down from the hustle and bustle of beta to a more soothing introspective alpha state. Also, as mentioned earlier, the best moments of creativity, those Eureka! flashes, occur mostly when theta waves are predominant. This theta zone corresponds to when we are verging between waking and sleeping, when we are in that Twilight Zone consciousness just mindfully floating at the gateway of sleep. This explains why we have such great ideas during this time period, and not surprisingly, this is the time when many scientists and other great thinkers have had flashes of insight. Einstein came up with the theory of relativity in this state. Nikola Tesla could perfectly visualize his inventions in this state. One of the Watson/Crick pair visualized the double helix and unlocked the secret of DNA while in this state.

Knowing the characteristics of the different brainwave states as previously outlined, we would have an extreme advantage if we could access certain brainwave states for certain activities. Fortunately, there is a way to do this and it is based on the scientific principle of entrainment. Binaural beat frequencies can be used to entrain or synchronize both hemispheres of our brain into one synergistic brainwave pattern. I know that may sound complicated, but in actuality it is pretty simple. Hopefully, in a few paragraphs you will not only fully understand the concept but with a little practice you will be just a few steps away from making your own binaural beats and entraining your own brainwaves. What's a binaural beat, you ask? Well, let's first go over the principles of entrainment.

Entrainment

The process of entrainment is pretty simple. If you have two similar tuning forks, if you strike one and hold it near the other one, the other will resonate at the same frequency. It also works with a piano. If you have two similarly tuned pianos in one room and strike a key on one of the pianos, the stretched chord attached to the same key on the other piano will vibrate. If a bunch of pendulum clocks were hung on a wall and each clock's pendulum was swinging at its own pace, not in sync with any of the other clocks, the passing of time would result in all the pendulums becoming synchronized with one another. Eventually, they will all be swinging together in unison. This synchronization of frequencies is the result of entrainment. It is a naturally occurring phenomenon that is constantly taking place when the opportunity avails.

The process of entrainment is so important because it has direct applications to our brain. Our brain operates much like a resonance chamber. Our brainwaves are pulsing at different amplitudes and frequencies depending on our degree of engagement in certain kinds of activities. Just like the tuning fork, the piano, and the pendulum, our brain can become entrained to certain brainwave patterns when exposed to the appropriate stimulus. This process was touched upon when we discussed the shaman and his use of the rattle to entrain his brainwaves to a particular frequency.

Along the same lines, when you are having a great conversation with someone, you may say, "they are on my wavelength", but the funny thing is that this phrase now has a scientific basis. When you are mutually engaged with another person, both people's brainwaves will have a tendency to synchronize or harmonize with each other. Conversely, it may also explain why certain people tend to bring the best or the worst out of you. You can be brought up or brought down to another's level merely by being in their presence. This process of entrainment operates at multiple levels so being aware of how your brain is triggered by entrainment will allow you to have greater control over all aspects of your life. Taking note of how you are affected by various stimuli you can determine what triggers the best in you and what brings about the worst.

Here is an Entrainment Awareness exercise…

Whenever you encounter people whether they are friends, family, or strangers, try to take a mental inventory of how you were feeling and what you were thinking before the encounter and then compare it to how you are feeling and what you are thinking after that person leaves. Most people do not realize that a lot of their moods are actually directly related to those that they interact with throughout their day. For example, an hour visit with an uplifting and energizing friend will have a positive effect on your whole being, but on the other hand, fifteen minutes with a negative person may leave you drained or negatively entrained for the rest of the day. It is another facet of the process of entrainment. Like creates and attracts like. Luckily, once you have a better handle on your waking awareness, you will be better insulated from the negative thoughts of others. You will also be able to play a more active role in your life when you are better informed about how reactive you are to certain kinds of people, places, or things.

After practicing this exercise, you may realize that you become much more attuned to your true self. You may realize that your actions, thoughts, and even your emotions are easier to maintain at optimal levels by exposing yourself to certain kinds of experience and avoiding others. Your waking benefits will also be countered by dreaming benefits. If you are in the habit of evaluating how a certain stimulus is affecting you and realizing that YOU are ultimately in control of how you think, act, and feel; you will be less likely to succumb to fear or other negative reactions while you are dreaming.

The Right and Left Hemispheres of the Brain

Along with the vital role that brainwaves play in determining our mental states, it is important to discuss the basic anatomy of our brain and how its parts interact and function. Our brains have a left and a right hemisphere. The left hemisphere is linear, logical, practical, and time orientated while the right hemisphere seems to be much more non-linear, abstract, creative, holistic, and non-logical. An accountant at work probably uses more of his right hemisphere than an artist at work would. We tend to favor particular hemispheres depending on what we are doing. If you were calculating stock market figures, you would be using more of your left side. If you were painting a picture, you would have more right hemispheric activity. Just as there is usually a predominance of certain brainwaves depending on

certain activities, there is also a predominance of either the right or left hemisphere of our brain depending on what we are doing. Also, like brainwaves there may be an infinite variety of interplay between both hemispheres, but in general, there is usually a predominance of one hemisphere over the other.

These hemispheres are connected by the corpus callosum. It serves as a conduit or a bridge between both sides. This bridge can literally be exercised and strengthened until it is physically larger and more capable of transmitting data between both hemispheres. By merging both hemispheres and allowing them to work together we can increase our mental fitness. It is basically like having a faster, more integrated computer system that is more capable of accessing, handling, and processing data. By doing this we would literally be using more of our brain in a more efficient manner.

How can we do this? Well, studies have shown that meditating can lead to brainwave states that display synchronization between both hemispheres. This hemispheric synchronization is a special state when both hemispheres are actively engaged at the same frequencies. The EEGs of skilled meditators have shown increased hemispheric synchronization as well as the ability to attain these mental states at will. Both hemispheres can be in sync at any brainwave levels such as alpha or theta or any other combinations. This measurable characteristic leads us to our next point of interest, binaural beat frequencies.

Binaural Beat Frequencies

The best way to explain a binaural beat frequency is to describe why and how they are made, but first a little background on their creator. Robert Monroe, the out of body pioneer, founded *The Monroe Institute* in Virginia. It is a research facility that has been investigating states of expanded consciousness and has created a process of systematically altering brainwaves to produce altered states of mind. Good ole' Robert Monroe and his journeys out of the body led him to study altered states of consciousness. By monitoring himself and other subjects while they experienced altered states, he and his team of researchers and scientists experimented with the use of sound to predictably alter one's consciousness. Over time, they developed the process of creating binaural beat frequencies. This process utilizes the scientific principle of entrainment to resonate your brain at specific frequencies.

Creating binaural beat frequencies is actually very simple. It's almost easier to do it than it is to say it. The idea is to play a slightly different tone in each ear. When listening to these tones, your brain takes the difference between the two and resonates at this differential frequency. If you have a beat frequency of 97 Hz in your left ear and 103 Hz in your right ear, your brain will perceive it as a 6 Hz differential, and your brain will resonate at this frequency which is in the Theta range.

When listening to a binaural beat frequency, you will hear a warbling tone. The amazing thing about this warbling tone is that it is NOT being played through the headphones. This vibrato effect is actually a creation of your mind. When you hear one tone in one ear and another slightly different tone in the other ear, the hemispheres of your brain synchronize, and it is this hemispheric synchronization which produces the wavering tone. There is a wonderful demonstration of this process on The Monroe Institute's website, http://www.monroeinst.com.. This type of online help and other web-related information and products will be outlined further in the support groups chapter under the Internet section.

Using this technology of creating binaural beat frequencies, The Monroe Institute has created a line of Hemi-Sync™ cassette tapes. By using these tapes, you can reliably attain certain brainwave states.

Certain tapes are tailored for healing. Others are geared for inner exploration. For example, one allows you to achieve the "body asleep/mind awake" state that we discussed previously. Although I have been in this state many times it still amazes me when I can hear myself snoring. There have even been numerous studies conducted that have linked the usage of the tapes to quicker healing, increased resistance to pain and accelerated learning abilities.

The Monroe Institute has been producing and documenting the results of their tapes for many years, but they are not the only place to purchase such audio aids. There are also a number of other tapes and CDs on the market which use the same principles to entrain your brainwaves to specific blends of frequencies. Tibetan monks and yogis have been wired to machines and monitored while they go into trance-like states. Certain characteristic brainwave patterns have been identified, and it is now possible to share the brainwave of a skilled meditator simply by wearing a set of headphones and being exposed to specific binaural beats.

How American can you get? Instant enlightenment through your walkman?!?!? Well, it's not quite that simple. When this technology is used as a guiding tool it can have profound effects, but I wouldn't fall victim to instant gratification syndrome. Entraining yourself to a Tibetan monk's brainwaves will make you about as enlightened as you would become by wearing his robe. For example, you may be able to entrain your brain to the exact brainwaves that a yogin may have when he is painlessly piercing his flesh, but I wouldn't recommend trying the same feat regardless of whether or not your brainwaves are the same. It is a structured belief system coupled with the brainwaves that produces the miraculous events that can't be explained by modern science.

Likewise, you could have the same brainwave patterns as someone experiencing enlightenment or nirvana or even someone having a lucid dream and that doesn't mean that YOU would be experiencing the same thing. That is not to imply that the brainwave states are not important because they are. The point is that in and of themselves brainwaves merely play a part in the overall process. With that in mind, by experiencing states of consciousness that you may not have experienced before, you are more likely to learn how to repeat these states on your own. Through practice and experience, you develop a more navigable consciousness. For a ship to sail the seas, it needs the right wind as well as a functioning sail. With the right "brainwave winds" you may be able to tailor a sail out of your belief systems and cruise into the horizon.

Creating your own Binaural Beat Frequencies

There are also computer programs you can use to create your own tapes with specific binaural beats embedded within them. One such program that you can download for free on the Internet is CoolEdit™ . It has several features that are worth mentioning and testing. First, it has a built-in brainwave synchronizer that can entrain your brainwaves to particular frequencies just by pressing a few buttons. You could start by recording a few simple affirmations and then use the brainwave synchronizer to embed this recording with the brainwave frequency of your choosing. These recordings can be saved as .wav files or .mp3 files on your computer, and you can listen to them before going to bed or in combination with the *Sleep/Wake/Back to Bed Method* for optimal results. For example, I have one file with embedded alpha and frequencies that has me saying repeatedly, "The next time I am dreaming, I will realize that I am dreaming." Playing this file as I am drifting off to sleep increases the odds of my becoming lucid in my following dream.

Also, CoolEdit™ has a function that allows you to generate tones. These tones can be used to create any

binaural beat frequencies or combinations of frequencies that you desire. The generated tones can be overlapped to make complex combinations and can be pasted onto a background of white, pink, or brown noise. All these colorfully termed background noises are basically static backdrops that create a Ganzfield effect on your mind, creating a repetitive background noise so that the tones have more effect. There is much more information about CoolEdit™ as well as step-by-step instructions on how to create binaural beat frequencies on my website. For further information, you can go online and access all this info at my website, and you can even download some sample .wav files I have made using CoolEdit™ . Check out the Internet section in the Support Chapter for the link to my site, Bird's Lucid Dreaming Website.

So we have the knowledge and now we have the tools, and the beauty of it is, they are highly refined and some are even free! You can use these as hypnosis tools, as relaxation guides, as a means of self-reflection and creative thinking/problem-solving, or as vehicle into altered states much like a modern day shaman's rattle. It helps maintain your awareness through the hypnagogic state, the period just at the edge of waking and sleeping. Time spent in this "border-zone" time period can be time well spent. Becoming aware of the whole process of falling asleep will enhance your lucid dreaming, and as mentioned this hypnagogic state is where creativity, problem solving, and imagery skills are easily accessible. I highly suggest that you read more on the subject of brainwaves and also the benefits of hemispheric synchronization. By becoming familiar with these subjects and by applying these concepts to your daily regime, you can vastly improve your awareness, enhance your mind and maximize your dreaming progress at the same time.

I have recently been working on creating a specialized program using brainwave entrainment to induce lucid dreams and out of body experiences. Throughout my dabblings with CoolEdit I have become quite proficient at making binaural beats, and I am the ideal subject since I listen to them nearly every night. What I have done is taken all the files that have worked for me and developed a trance induction sequence. Actually, at present time, I have created two Series, one for inducing lucid dreams and one focused on inducing out of body experiences. We'll go over the difference and similarities between lucid dreaming and out of body experiences in a later section. I have had good results by incorporating these guided audio journeys into my lucid dreaming regime. They act as a tool to facilitate non-physical experiences. Some tracks were designed to be played all night on loop/repeat mode so that the messages will slip into your dreams and spark your lucidity, and each Series as a whole can be listened to as one large induction sequence. When dealing with lucid dreams and out of body experiences I have always been a firm believer in increasing the odds in my favor whenever it is possible, and I think these Brainwave Mind Voyages that I have been developing are a definite leap in the right direction.

I am currently developing a companion set of CDs/tapes to go along with the two currently available. These new Mind Voyages will be the first in a set of Hypnosis-related Series. The current two Series that are available also have a good deal of hypnosis incorporated into their design as well as embedded subliminal messages aimed at inducing lucidity, but the upcoming Hypnosis Series will take a more clinical hypnotherapeutic approach as opposed to the current "guided experiential" approach.

If you are interested in finding out more information about these audio aids, you can visit my Brainwave Mind Voyages website at: http://go.to/mindvoyages . While there, you can check out info on any current releases and read more about how they were created and how they can be used to maximize your lucid dreaming progress.

Part II:BEYOND the Basics: The TERRAIN:

IX. Advanced Techniques

Now that you have covered the basics, it is time to move on to the skills and techniques you will need once you become lucid in a dream. If you put into practice all the aforementioned methods, techniques, and tips, you will inevitably become lucid in one of your dreams, but it is not that simple. You will now need to learn how to maintain and prolong your lucidity in order to maximize your experience. This part of the book will focus upon the lucid dreaming terrain. Once you become lucid, it will be a good idea to already know what to expect instead of having to learn by trial and error. Since the first moments of lucidity are often not as frequent as one might desire, it is best to be as prepared for it as possible. By being ready for it, you may be able to extend your first lucid moments beyond the average flash and fade, and with time and practice you will be able to use the techniques and tips in this section to extend your lucidity for longer and longer periods.

The most common experience for beginners who are following the steps is to have a dream in which they become lucid for only a brief moment and then they awaken. So don't be surprised or let down if your first lucid dream is rather short-lived. Just remember that your first few moments of solo-riding a bike probably were short-lived as well. A common first experience may be as short and simple as realizing you are dreaming, feeling a "rush" of adrenaline or euphoria, yelling at the top of your lungs, "I did it! I'm dreaming! I did it!" and then waking up in your bed. My first experience was very similar to this one, but now that I am more experienced I can maintain my lucidity for almost an hour, and sometimes even longer. Needless to say, that is a lot of time to spend exploring your lucid dreamscapes. In the beginning I was overjoyed if one of my lucid dreams lasted even five minutes long so keep in mind that you need to learn to walk before you can run a marathon.

For some reason, excessive amounts of excitability and intense emotions will often wake a beginner right from his lucid dream. The initial rush of becoming lucid can be so overwhelming that you want to do backflips and scream for joy, but it is just that intensity that will result in aborting the whole lucid dream. The first most important thing for beginners to learn is to avoid getting overly excited. It is a lot easier said than done, but with time and experience you will be able to handle more and more intensity without losing your focus or your lucidity. In the beginning you should contain your excitement as best as you can. There will be time enough for ecstatic overloads when you are better prepared to handle the rush. It is a good idea to have a simple goal for your first lucid dream. Something as simple as looking at your hands or calmly looking around you at the dreamscape would be a great initial mission.

Remember that you have the rest of your life to fulfill every wish your heart desires. When you wanted to learn how to ride a bike you didn't learn on ten-speed or a motorcycle for that matter. Keep it simple and your results are bound to be better. You could view it like a pilot who is acquiring flying hours. The more hours he flies, the more he learns, and the better he becomes at flying. If you attempt advanced lucid acrobatics from day one, all you can probably count on is that your lucid moments will be short-lived.

Take baby steps at first until you get the feel of it. The goal is to remain lucid in your dream for as long as you can without either waking up or slipping into a non-lucid dream, and in the beginning it is crucial to pace yourself.

So once you become lucid there are three routes you can take: you can maintain your lucidity, you can lose your lucidity by accidentally awakening, or you can lose your lucidity by simply forgetting that you are in lucid dream and slipping into a normal dream. In the beginning you may find that you are awakening prematurely, but once you become better at controlling your emotions, you will more than likely find that your biggest problem is losing your lucidity simply by becoming overwhelmed by aspects or objects in the lucid dream itself. These seemingly trivial attention-grabbers can be all it takes to forget that you are dreaming and lapse into a non-lucid dream. Slipping into a normal non-lucid dream from a lucid one is very common. As a matter of fact you may have one long dream in which your lucidity comes and goes several times in the dream. Even the intensity of your lucidity can increase or decrease, but let's not get ahead of ourselves. In order to prevent awakening prematurely and in order to avoid slipping into a non-lucid dream, there are many methods you can use to hold onto your lucidity once you have achieved it.

Maintaining Your Lucidity…

Here is a list of techniques that will help maintain your lucidity and prolong your lucid dreams…

1. *Staying calm.* As mentioned this will have a large emphasis in the beginning. As you progress you will be able to handle more and more, but there will always be a certain level of arousal or excitability that will cause the dreamer to awaken. Any techniques you normally use to stay calm could be used while in a dreamstate. For example, you could take a few deep breaths and relax, or you could talk yourself down by saying, "I am calming down." The mere fact that it is a dream and that it is your dream should be enough to remove any fears that may surface. You cannot be harmed, but until you truly know this and believe it, someone or something can definitely scare you. We'll deal with fears when we discuss obstacles to lucid dreaming later, but for now, have faith in the fact that YOU are the creator and you have nothing to fear but fear itself, literally.
2. *Spinning*. This one is pretty self-explanatory. If you are lucid in a dream and feel that you are losing your lucidity all you need to do is to start spinning yourself around in a circle like a whirling dervish. You may be surprised to find that in dreamland there are far less physical constraints such as gravity to slow down your spinning ability. You may wind up spinning like a top much faster than you ever thought you could, but don't worry there is no accompanying dizziness like there would be in the waking world. Many people swear by this method and I do agree that it works, but it also has its drawbacks. The main drawback is that you will most likely lose your visuals. Spinning in circles makes it nearly impossible to maintain coherent visuals. Usually if you are spinning your visuals are severely blurred or in most cases they are nonexistent. So if you sense that you are losing lucidity and start spinning, you may maintain your lucidity but once you stop spinning the odds are that you will be standing in a completely different dreamscape. Granted you will still be lucid, but oftentimes you might rather stay in the same dreamscape. Some people can use the spinning method and remain in the same dreamscape, or if they choose to change their dreamscape, they spin while intending a specific scenery change and when they have stop spinning they are standing in a freshly incubated dreamscape. Spinning is effective for maintaining

lucidity and it should be tried out if only for the pure novelty of it. It is certainly fun and effective, but there are better methods that will not result in losing your visuals.

3. *Focusing on any detail in the dream.* When you feel your lucidity dwindling, simply find any object to focus upon in the dream. It could be your hands, the ground beneath you, the stones on the road, a flower in the garden, just about any one thing will work. By focusing your attention on one object you selectively dismiss all the other stimuli while simultaneously reaffirming to yourself that you are dreaming. This reaffirmation of your lucidity is a crucial step that will be used in every method mentioned. You need to think repeatedly "these are my dream hands" or "this is a flower that I'm dreaming into existence."

   This method may be so effective because it simplifies your consciousness to one element or aspect thereby strengthened and focusing your lucidity. When there is too much going on around you, your attention may become scattered and your focus may in turn become weakened. Since you need to remain aware of the fact that you are dreaming even in the midst of a fully interactive, multi-faceted dreamscape, a sensory overload just like an emotional one can sometimes weaken your lucidity or even end it especially in the initial learning phases. Once you have re-stabilized your lucidity and are confident that you can interact within the dreamscape, you can look around and resume your activity. This method is very effective and does not usually result in your visuals being lost or changed. On occasion your single-minded focused attention on one object may result in a changed dreamscape when you look around, but at least you never lose your visuals completely.
4. *Rubbing your hands together or rubbing your hands on any dream object.* This method is particularly effective. It relies on the fact that your senses in a dream are usually extremely heightened. The tactile sensations of rubbing your hands together or rubbing them over a fabric or flower or carpet are exceptionally pleasurable and extraordinarily intense. Any action that activates your sense of touch is an effective means of prolonging your lucidity whenever you sense that it may be fading. Just like in the previous technique, while you feel your hands rubbing against each other or over whatever dream object that you choose, reaffirm the fact that you are dreaming. After you feel comfortably rejuvenated with a stable level of lucidity, feel free to resume your lucid dream explorations.
5. *Keep moving.* This method is the opposite of focusing on a particular detail in the dream. The idea here is to not focus on the details, but to keep in motion. Actually, you should not focus on anything in particular but the movement AND the idea that you are dreaming and in the midst of a lucid dream. If you are walking or flying, just walk or fly around without letting your mind be dragged into the surroundings, just focus on the fact that you are dreaming while you walk or fly. Once you have "re-lucidified" yourself, you can reengage yourself into the lucid dream.

6. *Use verbal affirmations and verbal commands.* This is in my opinion *the most effective technique.* I had read in William Buhlman's "Adventures Beyond the Body" that if you're having an out-of-body experience and your vision isn't too clear or if your surroundings aren't stable you can simply will it or intend it to become more clear and stable by saying forcefully and confidently, "INCREASE CLARITY NOW!". I took this concept and

expanded it a bit further to use verbal commands to create just about anything I needed. It is simple, straight to the point, and it can be used in almost any dream situation without losing your visuals. You simply remind yourself verbally that you are dreaming. While in a lucid dream, whenever you feel your awareness slipping or fading, just say to yourself, "I am lucid dreaming." By reminding yourself quite frequently that are dreaming in your lucid dream, you are able to maximize the length of your experience. You can adapt this technique to determine what works best for you. Some people such as myself prefer to use verbal commands. You command yourself by saying, "*Maintain Lucidity*!!!" or "*Clarity, Now!!!*". You can even create some remarkable results by saying, "*Increase Lucidity, Now*!!!" which is an advanced technique that we will discuss in a later chapter.

Using a simple but forceful command usually produces miraculous effects. This technique not only works to instantly increase or regain your lucidity, but long term use of this method will also develop many beneficial long term dreaming habits. Just as "reality-checks" during the day will become engrained into your daily behavior, doing mental check-ups during your lucid dreams will also become a habit. By constantly being aware of your lucidity, you are that much more likely to maintain it. Over time this method will become second nature and as a result you will have longer and longer lucid dreams, and as an added bonus, you will also have better overall dream control.

There are many occasions where using commands will save the day or save the dream in this case. For example, during a lucid dream if your sight becomes blurry or if you vision begins to fade, you can say *"Increase Clarity, Now*!!!". This will usually sharpen up your sight in moments. Also, if your visuals have gone out completely, you can say, "*Create Visuals, Now*!!!" Being able to create visuals and reenter another lucid dreamscape is an incredibly useful trick, especially when the alternative is waking up due to a lack of visuals and ending the lucid dream entirely. You can create just about any effect that you may need simply by verbally expressing your intent. We'll go more into depth on this when we deal with controlling your lucid dreams. For now, it will suffice to say that verbal commands will play a pivotal role in maximizing your progress. I have tried and tested all of these methods repeatedly and I tend to predominantly use the verbal technique in most of my lucid dreams.

All of these methods should be tested to determine what works best for you. If something works, that is great, but don't just settle for the first thing that works. It would be best to keep using what works but keep testing others to see if they also work. The more techniques you can master, the better. By always trying to learn more and test more, you will be developing a personalized set of dream skills. As you develop and refine these skills, you will be more successful and more confident. Considering that our dreams are so highly influenced by our thoughts and emotions, having confidence will create a foundation for repeatable results. So in the beginning it is best to feel your way through it with an open-mind and remember that there is always going to be more to learn. With time and experience you will get better at maintaining your lucidity, and then you will have more time to explore your Dreamtime.

When I first began lucid dreaming, even a few moments of becoming lucid seemed like a great accomplishment, and it was! Once I became able to maintain my lucidity for several minutes I was even more thrilled. Over time my lucid explorations lengthened from five minutes to ten minutes then twenty,

and if I am lucky, I am now able to remain fully conscious in the dream realm for an hour or more. I would expect that as time progresses I can look forward to even longer periods of lucidity. Even though your first flashes of lucidity may be short-lived by pragmatically testing and continually refining your dream skills, you will undoubtedly learn how to remain fully conscious for longer periods.

Controlling Your Lucid Dreams

Before we go into some of the effective techniques that you can use to maximize your dream control, we should first discuss dream control in general. You have undoubtedly had normal dreams where you have created certain events within the dream. Maybe you were looking for someone and found that person, or maybe you were thinking about a specific turn of events and then sure enough they occurred. Maybe you discovered that you were able to fly, and by doing so you were able to save yourself from some predicament. We exercise a certain amount of dream control simply by thinking and acting within the dream itself whether the dream is a lucid one or not.

The more effectively you can maneuver within the dream realm, the better the odds that you will have positive experiences while in a dream. Increasing your dream control will have numerous benefits ranging from decreased fear to better navigational skills. When discussing dream control the focus centers upon the degree to which your thoughts and intentions directly affect the dream. Even if you develop exceedingly high levels of dream control, there will still be factors within the dream that don't seem to be under your conscious control, and that is fine. The complexity of exactly how your mind works to create such vivid dreamscapes may never be fully understood, but for now, it is safe to assume that the subconscious mind plays a large role in supplying dream material.

It would be simply too much to expect your conscious mind to be controlling all facets of the dream at the same time. For example, you may be lucid and exercise a great degree of dream control but you are not consciously creating the entire dreamscape. You are influencing a preexisting structure. It is as if your subconscious mind fills in the general blanks and creates the basic playing, and it is up to you to consciously interact within this given environment. You can influence many factors within the dreamscape and you can even actively create changes in this environment, but there is a substantial amount of underlying help that you receive from your subconscious mind.

When you think about it, if you did consciously generate every facet of the dream from the petals on every flower to the beautiful horizon, it would be a lot less fun and a lot less insightful. One amazing thing about dreams is that they are so unpredictable and so insightful, precisely because they are coming from a source that is more comprehensive than your fragmented conscious mind. You will be directly interacting with your subconscious in many ways and learning which approaches will work best in certain situations. When I say work best, I mean which actions, thoughts or intentions will bring about a desired outcome.

The amount of dream control may vary from dream to dream, but just like in the case of prolonging your lucidity, with time there is a tendency for the dreamer to become more skilled at positively maneuvering through the dream. It makes perfect sense when you think about it. The more experience you have the more you will learn through trial and error which ways work best for you. Hopefully, the following dream control tips and techniques will give you the advantage of knowing beforehand what to expect, how to react, and most importantly, how to create the results that you desire.

The Power of Intent

First of all, if I were to summarize the mechanics of effective dream control into one word it would be "*intent*". Your dreams are the product of your conscious and subconscious thoughts combined with your belief systems as we mentioned earlier so it should not be too surprising to learn that your thoughts are the driving factor in your dreams. To tie this in with dream control and the power of our intent, we need to establish the proper foundation within our belief systems to allow us the ability to have an influence in our dreams. For example, if you feel that you are rarely in control during your waking life then you will probably have more work cut out for you when you are working on developing your dream control. You will need to redefine and develop your belief systems so that you not only think that you are capable of being in control, but you must believe it. If you don't believe it, the power of your intent will not have the proper framework to carry out its magic.

On the other hand, if you are a control freak, you may be a natural when it comes to dream control but you may want to exercise less control in order to learn that you can find peace and security even when you give up your need for control. Sometimes it is wiser to go with the flow than it is to waste energy and time following your tight fisted tendencies. Flowing is almost always the best option when your only other option is forcing. This is especially true in the dream realm where a forced experience may result in a missed opportunity to learn something very valuable. Oftentimes had you just gone with the natural flow, your subconscious may have had a few surprise lessons waiting for you.

With the right beliefs in place, the power of intent is our ticket to nearly everything you could ever imagine. It is true in waking life and it is true in the dream realm. For the most part, we take our intent for granted. When we want to pick up a glass, we simply pick it up and give little thought to the power of our intent that created a chain of neurological and physical events leading to the extension of our arm and grasping of our fingers. As a matter of fact, sometimes our intent is so neglected and so unrealized that we do things without even knowing why we are doing them. Take a look at all of your mental and physical habits, and I would be willing to bet that if you are being honest with yourself that you could find a lot of outmoded patterns that once served a purpose but lost their usefulness a long time ago. Being aware of your intent and developing a strong intent will help curb this problem.

How can you strengthen your intent? Well, first we should take a deeper look at how and what our intent truly encompasses and how it applies to the dream realm. To create something we must first intend it. This holds true for every action we take from walking down the street to building a skyscraper to influencing our dreams. The difference between just thinking and intending is a matter of emotional charge and determined focus. We could think anything even fearfully uncontrollable thoughts that have an emotional charge, but we intend that which we desire for the most part. I've never heard of anyone who intended to break his or her arm. The emotional charge that powers our intent is based on creating positive effects within us and in our surroundings. Even if you are a masochist, the pain you intend upon yourself is desirable in your mind based upon your belief systems and your personal desires or else you wouldn't be a masochist.

Our intent is the foundation that provides us with that which we desire or need, but it is also much more. It could be viewed as a personality because sometimes intent can be stronger or weaker. A strong intent when viewed in this way is quite similar to your will. Having strong will power enables you to overcome obstacles and follow through on your intentions. Your will is like the stamina and the persistence of your intent, and once you have infused your intent with your will power and the faith of proper belief systems you give birth to a powerful intent.

The difference between weak and strong intent is like the difference between the light coming from a light bulb and the light coming from a laser beam. A light bulb sends light rays out in many directions thereby scattering and diminishing the overall power. A laser beam harnesses the power of the photons by focusing them all in one unified direction, this concentrated flow of light has extremely more power than the non-focused light coming from a light bulb. The rays from a light bulb could light up a room, but a laser beam could blast through the ceiling of that room and reach for the nearest star. Having a powerful intent is the focusing of your thoughts, your will and your intentions towards a common goal. Just like a laser when you harness the power of your intent, your intentions are that much more likely to have the power and potential to manifest into your waking and dreaming "reality".

You will undoubtedly find that strengthening your intent will have positive effects all across the boards. A finely tuned intent will allow you to induce your lucid dreams much more consistently, prolong your lucidity for longer and longer periods, and it will also play a crucial role in developing your dream control. In the dream realm, the power of intent creates instant results. When you intend to fly, you have the faith and follow through to know that you can fly, and in turn you begin to soar through the air. A strong intent leads to a stronger level of self-confidence that in turn creates expectations that become fulfilled due to the absence of doubt. Because dreams are so dependent on thought forms and belief systems, if you have doubts about what you can and can't do then you may be limiting yourself simply by harboring those doubts in your mind. It is the power of your intent that will allow you to overcome your doubts and strengthen your ability to control your dreams more successfully.

The Power of Expectation

Having just mentioned that expectations can be sabotaged by doubt, one technique that can enhance your dream control rests in *the power of expectation*. Just like harnessing the power of your intent, you can develop the ability to manifest just about anything in your dreams if you can engrain the belief that what you expect is what you will find. For example, one thing you may want to do in a lucid dream is to find one of your friends or a deceased relative or anyone for that matter. You could look all over with no results or you may be lucky enough to find that person immediately, but if you use the power of expectation you will definitely increase the odds of finding whomever you are seeking. The process is very simple. Just say or think to yourself, "I know that I will find so-and-so just around this corner!" The magic occurs when you not only believe that you will see this person but you also expect it, and as you round that corner, voila! Not surprisingly, you will find that person.

Always remember that you get what you expect in the dream realm, but keep in mind that this rule also has a negative side. For those of you who expect the worst be careful because you just might get it. Keep your intent focused on the positive and realize that when you are dreaming you are what you think, and if you are currently having an unpleasant experience you can change it by changing your thoughts. Don't be bullied around by your insecurities or your doubts when you can blast them away with the laser beam of your intent.

Paradoxically, dreams are very unpredictable so you may encounter a lot of what you don't expect. Even though this is the nature of a dream, when you are fully conscious within a dream you have much more influence on how you react. With practice you can learn to control the dream by controlling your thoughts and harnessing your intent. You can use the power of expectation whenever you are in a pinch to maximize the odds of creating desirable outcomes. I have pulled it out of my dreaming bag of tricks many, many times and it is usually a very effective technique for heightening your dream control.

The Joy of Flight

Flying is one thing that you will have to learn to control by actually getting out there, or "up there", and doing it.. The explanation of the process is simple. You intend to fly and the next thing you know you are mentally propelling yourself through the dreamscape. When things go well, it is as easy as that, but unfortunately, it is not always that simple. This section will deal with some of the common problems that you may encounter, and hopefully, the methods, tips and strategies will help you get your wings.

Since flying cannot be done in the waking world, it is usually one of the most rewarding and exhilarating experiences for most lucid dreamers. It is very common for lucid dreamers to have increased flying dreams even when they are not lucid ones. If I have a flying dream then I usually will have a lucid dream within a day or two. I'm not certain why flying dreams seem to be a precursor to lucid dreams, but many lucid dreamers report the same correlation. It could be that when you become lucid you usually seem to have a natural ability to fly (if you think you can), or maybe it is the fact that if we are flying then it is safe to conclude that we are dreaming.

Some people believe that while we sleep a part of us actually leaves our physical body and travels while we lie resting in bed. Most modern believers refer to this non-corporeal aspect of our physical body as the astral body. Others refer to it as a dreambody, a dreaming body, an energy body, a double or a doppleganger, but the list of terms to describe this vehicle is nearly endless. The concept may sound strange at first, but this belief has been shared by many different societies throughout history. The ancient Egyptians used the term "KA" to describe this "vehicle of the soul". Hawaiian kahunas, Cabbalists and shamanic traditions from across the globe have their respective terminology for this concept. In light of this background knowledge, flying dreams could be viewed as conscious interpretations of these nocturnal travels. We may never know the exact cause of flying dreams, but a link between flying dreams and lucid dreams definitely exists, and flying is an exhilarating and efficient way of traveling in your dreams.

Surprisingly, the ability to fly in your dreams becomes very natural over time. You will not only discover what techniques you prefer, but you will be continually finding new ways to take flight. I have learned over a dozen different ways to fly. Many of these flying styles are listed at the end of this section. Some have just come naturally. Other times, characters in my dreams have taught methods to me. Since flying is such a wonderful part of the lucid dreaming experience, let's go over the history of my Dream Flight School to see what you can expect.

First, we will cover the overall process and later we will address some methods to overcome the common problems so you can maximize your progress. Dream Flight School seems to flow through several stages of development. Stage One is the beginner phase. It is characterized by a lack of overall know-how. You practice and as you become more accustomed to flying, you progress to Stage Two, the advancing phase. In Stage Two you have confidence and more experience. You refine your flying skills and when you are not able to fly you are beginning to find ways to overcome being grounded. Once you have logged enough flight hours you progress to Stage Three. Stage Three is the advanced level. You have far less problems flying if any at all. You have had numerous chances to polish your soaring skills, and you have the know-how to solve most obstacles that may hinder your flying ability.

Assuming that you are new to flying, we will start with Stage One. Everything is new and to pass on to the next level you need to get some experience flying. In this beginning phase you are usually trying everything and anything to stay afloat. Learning by trial and error is the usual route, but since you are

going to have some inside information you may spend much of Stage One testing out the methods we will cover in this section. At first, flying is pretty much a hit or miss operation. In some dreams you may fly very well, but in others after countless attempts you may not even get off the ground. It is very common for you to be able to fly in the beginning of the dream, but eventually your flying power may dwindle down to nothing. You might not be able to get up enough speed or you might simply be too heavy to fly. This problem with fading flying power begins in Stage One but can also persist into Stage Two. I never could figure out why it was that I would lose my flying ability especially when I was wonderfully executing aerial maneuvers minutes beforehand.

Another common problem with early flight is just a plain lack of control. This can be a troubling feature of Stages One and Two. Maybe you have too much swerving in your turns or maybe you cannot properly control your speed or direction. One intimidating structure in the lucid landscape does a great job of forcing you to learn better control. Those in Stage One of Flight School frequently report encountering electrical power lines in their flight paths. The presence of power lines is reported far to frequently for it to be some sort of coincidence. These problematic electrical lines may figure prominently in many of your early flying excursions. Fear of crashing into these power lines seem to be a central theme in these flight lessons, and believe me, you will learn to fly pretty quickly when you are faced with the alternative of being careless and crashing into those ominous wires. The frequent presence of these power lines may be nothing more than a phenomenon of modern lucid dreaming flight school, but it certainly heightens your awareness and serves as a great way to quickly teach maneuverability.

In any case, don't be surprised if you encounter some power lines along your way, but rest assured that although the fear of them in the dream is real, there is absolutely no danger aside from your fear itself. If you do crash into one, you will definitely be more scared than harmed. You may scare yourself awake or maybe even lose your visuals, but luckily the ability to experience pain is virtually absent in dreams. I have crashed into them on numerous occasions and can vouch for the fact that they are relatively harmless. As is often the case while dreaming, the biggest threat is from yourself and your fears.

Before reaching the advanced level, you will have your fair share of airborne hours to log. Luckily, these hours may be some of the most breath-taking moments of your life. Throughout your development you may still be harboring some hidden doubts or even some conscious ones. It will be these doubts that will keep you grounded or cause you to lose your flying power. You may have troubles flying and keeping coherent visuals. You may also find it difficult to maneuver while in flight. Until you get some flight hours under your belt you just have to bear with any difficulties you encounter along the way, but to accelerate your progress, let's go over some of these common problems and learn some practical solutions.

The Speed to Altitude Ratio

One very common occurrence is that you will not have the greatest control over your flight so you may fly too fast and lose your vision or your bearings. By flying too fast you may create a choppy dreamscape beneath you. What happens is that by flying too fast and too close to the ground, the visuals of the ground can't keep up with the speed at which you are flying. As a result your vision becomes choppy or may start to flicker like an old poorly filmed movie. If you exceed the speed with which your visuals can remain stable and flowing then your visuals may start to get blurry. You may even become so disorientated that you lose your lucidity all together. There seems to be a Speed to Altitude Ratio that you can use to avoid this happening. The rule is pretty simple. When you are flying low to the ground

only fly at a moderate pace. For faster flying you should be higher above the ground. If you can't control your speed and seem to be going too fast for your visuals to remain stable then it is best to immediately increase your altitude. From a higher altitude the ground will be moving slower than it would if you were zipping along at treetop level.

In the beginning and even sometimes in later stages, violating this Speed to Altitude Ratio usually results in a total loss of vision, and this lack of sight usually aborts your lucid dream and you awaken. In the case of lost sight, it is possible to restore your visuals as long as you don't wake up or lose your lucidity. Losing your visuals can happen a lot while in lucid dreams, and it occurs even more frequently when you are flying. You may accidentally crash into a building or have something unexpected happen that causes some panic, and this confusion blows out your visuals. The most common way to lose your vision is by flying too fast and violating the Speed to Altitude Ratio so keep this ratio in mind when you are zipping across the skyline. We'll go over how to restore lost visuals in one of the next sections. Since it happens so often and is such an important obstacle to overcome it deserves its own section.

Another common flight problem is that you may not be able to increase your altitude or maybe you can only fly very slowly. The solution to these problems and many more to obstacles to come rests in your intent. The process of flying is purely thought and intent driven. As with everything else, you will get better with time and practice. Since you haven't logged as many flight hours you have less experience and in turn less confidence in your ability, but there is one magical secret to flight that almost always works for me. Hopefully, when you are faced with some flying setbacks you can apply this next technique, and it just may allow you to graduate from Flight School with flying colors.

The Gravity/Density Principle

Once I started using this method my flying ability dramatically improved. The technique is simple and based upon what I call the Gravity/Density Principle. The principle is pretty simple. If something becomes less dense it will eventually rise. Helium is lighter than air so a helium balloon rises into the air. Most flight problems stem from an inability to get off the ground. This inability to rise into the air usually is the toughest obstacle to overcome. It usually starts with an inability to maintain your altitude while flying. You may start descending when you are intending to climb. It feels as if you are losing the mental battle to overcome gravity. To combat the problem of an overbearing gravity all you need to do is rethink the situation. What is holding you to the ground is the fact that you must think, believe or feel that you are too heavy to lift off into the sky. Maybe not consciously, but somewhere inside you, there is a belief that it is weighting you to the ground. If you are lucid then this is your dream, and you have absolute control over how heavy you really are. All you have to do is change your density and you can easily overcome the effects of gravity. Simply think of yourself as being lighter than the air. Intend yourself to be as light as a helium balloon and you will start rising.

The success of this technique is based partly on your intent and partly on your expectation, but the results are phenomenal. It is the manner in which you approach the problem that makes the difference. In one scenario you are noticing and addressing the problem of not being able to fly. You are thinking in present terms of how you cannot fly, and this creates an experiential feedback loop that continues to play out the problem that you are trying to avoid. As a result you try to force yourself to fly. You wind up fighting your inability to take flight. As mentioned, forcing and fighting are not the ways to solve a problem. It may be your first impulse, but it is usually ineffective. The key lies in changing your mindset.

Instead of combating the problem with a forced intent you must rethink the situation from a different

perspective and create a solution. First, you need to let go of your supposed inability to fly and rethink your position in this dream. This step releases you from the grasp of the problem and allows you to realize that you are the one who is in control of this dream. Secondly, you draw your focus to the solution. In this case, the solution is to make yourself less dense than the air that surrounds you. Now, it is as simple as intending to become lighter and you will begin to soar into the air. Whenever you have a problem with flying, you should remember that it isn't your inability to fly that is the problem. It is the way you have defined your densities combined with gravity that has grounded you. In summary, to solve this grounding dilemma just stop being so dense.

Applying the Gravity/Density Principle not only allows you to take flight in desperate conditions, but it also can be used to produce incredible handling and maneuverability while in flight. To increase your altitude just become even lighter and to descend just become denser. To change directions just imagine that you are the center of gravity and by changing your inner density in whatever direction will propel you in that direction. If you are rising up and want to go to the right just envision that you are much less dense on your right side, and this will propel you in that direction.

The principle of using density to propel you in any direction works extremely well. Once you have the idea engrained in your head that becoming lighter will give you lift off, it is rather simple to modify the concept to allow you to control your inner density at will and thereby allow you to fly in any direction you choose. It has the added bonus of allowing you to make immediate stops by making immediate changes to your density as it relates to the environment. You don't need to get "mathematical" about it. It is as simple as saying my density is lighter or heavier in certain directions. If you want to stop then just intend it to equalize all densities so that you will hover right where you are.

Once you get used to the method it can allow you to make hairpin turns that you couldn't manage if you were using the other conventional flying methods that we'll discuss in a moment, and the beauty of it is that it is usually a foolproof method. The concept of overcoming gravity by changing your mass can also be used in conjunction with some of the other flying methods that we'll touch upon right now. Whenever you are using a certain style of flight if you ever encounter some difficulties in controlling your flight just add this Gravity/Density Principle and expect to have some smooth sailing.

Common Methods of Flight

1. *Superman style*. This one is pretty much self-explanatory. You run, you jump, and you soar through the sky with the greatest of ease, flying horizontal with your arms reaching in the direction of your flight. I would venture a guess that this is probably the most common method of flight for Americans since we were all raised in a culture where the archetypal image of human flight would naturally be of the "Superman" variety. This is a good method because it is quick, extremely fun, and it is a rather comfortable and natural flying position.
2. *Swimming style*. This is another very common method probably due to the fact that swimming is one activity where we are buoyant and seem to be somewhat removed from the gravitational constraints of our walking world. Some people fly through the air doing the breaststroke or whatever style of swimming they prefer. As a child I used the swimming method in almost all of my flying dreams, and every now and then I still enjoy swimming through the air, mostly for the pure fun of it because it really isn't the quickest nor the most maneuverable technique. It is good enough for slow flight and is very effective for hovering in the air much like treading water into the air

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3. *The Gravity/Density Principle*. We just went over this one in detail, and I would stress that I think this is the most effective method. It can be used along with any of the others to help tighten up your aerial acrobatics as well as add any needed boost to your flying power. Incredibly good performance, reliability, and remarkable handling like stopping on a dime are the trademarks of this technique.
4. *The Wing Flapping Technique*. As absurd as it may sound I would bet every lucid dreamer has flown this way at least once. You basically just pretend that you are a bird and start flapping those arms and hope to get airborne. If you're feeling silly or aren't that self-conscious you may love this technique. Plus whenever you are in a jam, you can always give a few flaps for some added lift even if you are using another technique, but in my book this method is strictly for the birds. It takes way to much effort to maintain flight and the handling is exceptionally lousy, but whose to say how it will work for you unless to try it out yourself.
5. *The Rocket Propulsion Method*. This style utilizes the idea that you have some kind of rocket thrusters on your feet that allow you to take flight immediately from a standing position. The name of the game here is speed, but you lose a little handling due the increased velocity. It is definitely not recommended for low atmospheric travel because you would most certainly violate the Speed to Altitude Ratio. This is not the best technique, but it is very useful for avoiding danger and especially useful for traveling long distances. It is my recommended mode of travel if you are interested in shooting to the moon or traveling outside this earth's atmosphere. Most of the other methods would never allow you to cover such vast distances without getting sidetracked along the way. It is also an incredible rush to experience the tremendous speeds, but be careful or you may just thrust yourself right into losing your visuals, awakening or losing your lucidity due to the rush.
6. *The Visual Grab Technique*. In this technique you simply look where you want to go and then you were visually pull the images towards you. You move by your intent to draw yourself forward. Just as you can grab yourself forward you can also push yourself away from any objects. This method is best used to fine-tune your positioning when you are in hover mode. In the beginning this was one of my standard back-up techniques if everything else had failed me. Aside from its fine-tuning ability, this is not the greatest method and tends to result in some rather slow flying, but if other methods are failing you, it just may do the trick.
7. *The Climb and Jump Technique*. This is somewhat common and can be effective when all other methods are not working. You just find the tallest structure in the vicinity whether it is a tree, a lightpost or a building, and you climb to the top and jump into a soaring flight. It may sound scary, but it is very rare that you fall flat on your face although that has happened to me a few times. Luckily, the accompanying fear was worse than the force of the blow itself. After jumping you usually can transform the gliding fall into full blown flight. At the very least you should be able to get a great coasting soar that allows you to cover a decent distance. From your landing point you find another tall place and do it again. When you can't seem to get off the ground this is always a viable alternate. It also helps you overcome the fears of heights, falling, and pain in your dreams.
8. *The Magic Carpet Method*. I would imagine this method would be more common in the

Middle East, but anyone can fly around on his or her own magic carpet if you really feel the need. I tried it out just to see what it would be like to fly on a magic carpet and was not disappointed. If you have little confidence in yourself it may help to have faith in the carpet to get you around your dreamscape, but I would advise learning to rely on yourself. I would imagine that this method would be good for group travel since it would allow you to focus less on the flying and more on the group's interaction. Plus, taking a fabled voyage on your own magic carpet is a magical experience in and of itself.

9. *The Teleportation Method.* This is not so much a flying technique as it is a highly advanced and extremely effective method of dream travel. The idea is to instantaneously transport yourself from one place to another. Using this method you can entirely bypass the flying and save a lot of valuable lucid time that would have been spent traveling. There are many different ways to teleport. You can create an energy portal or a door and intend to enter it and come out the other side at your desired destination. In keeping with the Star Trek series, you could simply have yourself beamed anywhere you decide. You could find a picture in your dream and intend a particular scene to appear in the picture. Once the scenery has formed in the picture, you can carry your awareness right into the scene. Next thing you know, you are standing in your desired location. Some people use this picture method, but instead of a picture they use a television. They intend to tune to a specific place and start changing the channels. Once they find the right station, they enter into the set. Teleporting is probably the ultimate method of dream travel because you can instantaneously cover immense distances, you can even travel through time or take an inter-dimensional voyage.

   Why fly when you can teleport? The experienced lucid dreamer will love

   teleporting, but it may cause some confusion to beginners. Beginners may not have the strong intent required to teleport to the desired location. They may end up in China instead of Hawaii, but don't let that stop you from trying it out. Also, when learning to teleport you may occasionally lose your dream sight or you may awaken, but with some practice you will get better at it.

   Also, the Teleportation Method works both ways so you can attempt to teleport anyone or anything to where you currently are. This can be a great way of finding your friends or acquiring any needed dream objects. The possibilities are endless but the practice and experience are what you need to get this technique mastered.

10. *Swami style*. This is probably not the most common method. In fact I've never heard of anyone but me using it, but it is a very regal way to travel. You sit cross-legged Indian style, and merely intend to take flight or hover around the dreamscape. It is good for slow local traveling as well as an impressive and effective way of hovering. It is also a good way to tote someone around with you in a dream who doesn't know how to fly. You can have them sit on your lap as you float through the sky.

    11.) Bouncing Method. For this technique you simply jump up and down and lengthen the amount of time that you spend in the air. After a few leaps you can convert your leaps and bounds into full-blown flight. This one is good for the beginner and will also come through in a pinch if you are having troubles with any other methods.

There are many other ways to fly and I am sure you will discover many new and unique methods all by yourself. These are just some of the more common ones that you should try out and add to your arsenal of flight skills. Try them all and figure out which ones are most suited to your flying needs. They all have certain charms and specialties so it is a good idea to try and master as many as you can. Practice flying figure-eights in the sky and get comfortable with your aerial maneuvering. The better you can fly, the more pleasurable and successful your lucid excursions will become because you will be able to put more energy into the happenings of the dream as opposed to dealing with the troubles of travel. Flight control may be one of the most important aspects of dream control albeit an advanced one. In any case, aside from being practical it is so much fun that you definitely don't want to miss out on the joys of flight.

Restoring your Dream Vision

We've discussed how losing your dream visuals can be a recurrent problem. The scenario goes something like this: You are walking down a street in a dreamscape and something startling happens to you. Becoming frightened, you panic and as a result you may begin to lose your vision. Your dream sight may black out entirely, or it may just become grainy or choppy. Without any visual stimuli you may become confused and disorientated. If you are not prepared, this uncertainty can cause you to lose your lucidity. In a worst case scenario, your dreaming awareness will become confused and weakened, and before you even realize it your awareness will begin to shift to your physical body. This redirection will usually abort the whole dreaming process and wake you from the dream.

There are many ways to lose your dream sight. You might become too emotionally charged and as a result your vision suffers. You may fly too fast or accidentally crash. You could be moving or thinking too fast, and this overload blows out your visuals. You may even lose your sight spontaneously for no apparent reason. In any case, losing your visuals is one of the easiest ways to lose your lucidity. However, by learning ways to restore your lost vision you can prevent awakening prematurely and prolong your lucid dreams. So many lucid dreams end this way, but so few people have ever offered practical tips and solutions to handle the problem. Hopefully, this section will give you the preparation needed to overcome any bouts of blindness.

Here is a list of some other tips and suggestions you can use to restore lost dream sight…

1. *Don't panic.* As with most events in the dream realm, panic usually triggers the dream to abort. Remain calm if your vision blacks out or gets blurry and realize that you are still dreaming and that you will soon enter into a brand new lucid dreamscape. Just be calm and wait patiently for any new visuals to form.
2. *Don't Think about Your Physical Body Lying in Bed.* Nine out of ten times, if you think about your physical body, your awareness will be teleported from a lucid dreamstate into a hypnapompic state. You will become too aware of your physical body and this will draw your awareness away from its involvement with your dreaming body. Even if you have no visuals when you are in a lucid dreamstate you are still "existing" somewhere that is not your bed. It just so happens that it is completely dark for the moment. By maintaining the awareness that you are still dreaming you allow the dreamstate to continue, whereas direct thoughts or any focusing on the "other you" who is physically lying in bed may instantaneously pull you out of your dreaming state of mind. It is a fine line to tread but with practice you will become familiar with the subtle nuances of your awareness. In summary, keep your attention focused on the fact that you are dreaming and just wait for your sight to

restore.

3. *Verbally Intend to Restore your Visuals*. We covered this earlier when discussing the verbal technique. It is as simple as saying to yourself, "Create New Visuals, Now!!!". You have to say it, believe it and expect it. After intending new visuals, just relax and allow them to form. Don't force them. Just flow with them as they unfold, and eventually you can enter right into them.
4. *Try Blinking your Dream Eyes*. I stumbled across this one time while I was hovering in Limbo-Land. Visuals were not forming, and for some reason I started blinking my dream eyes, not my physical eyes. This blinking helped create new visuals. It may have something to do with the fact that in the beginning phases of visual formation usually the first few images are flashes. The imagery will flash and flicker for a while until it becomes solidified and stabilized into a fully interactive dreamscape. If you start blinking your dream eyes it seems to work as a cue to produce similar flashes of imagery. After a number of blinks accompanied with the intent to create new visuals, you usually will start to see some imagery forming. The imagery is literally blinked into existence. Keep blinking, intending and expecting and soon you can stop blinking because you will be standing in a newly formed lucid "reality".
5. *Let your Thoughts Unfold*. This is as simple as just allowing your mind to have a free flow of thoughts while remaining fully lucid. These thoughts will cascade through your mind and eventually crescendo into a visual manifestation. You can focus them on a particular subject if you are attempting to incubate a dream, or you can just allow them to flow freely and then see where it takes you. Just remember to maintain your lucidity throughout the process.
6. *Practice your Visualization Skills*. This is something that you can do every night before you go to bed as well as practice when you lose you visuals. Pick any object you feel comfortable visualizing. It could be an apple or a flower or even your house. Try to envision it as clearly as you can. Focusing on every detail can produce surprisingly realistic flashing imagery, but try to maintain the image as a stable solid image. By practicing your visualization skills every night before you go to bed you will develop the ability to visualize at will, and then whenever you find yourself in Limbo-Land you will have no problem conjuring up a new dreamscape or even incubating a specific one.
7. *Incorporate Motion into your Visualizations*. When you begin to develop visualization ability, you will be able to add motion to your visualizations. You will not only be able to envision that apple, flower, or house, but you will be able to spin it around or visually fly around it. This is an extremely important part of the process. Whenever you add motion and movement to your visualizations, you are literally pumping life into them. Making them less inanimate and more life-like allows your imagery to take on the realistic three-dimensionality that you need in order to actually enter into them and interact with them. The concept of movement is also very prevalent in dreams. You as the dreamer are almost always on the go, doing this or that. Can you remember the last time you dreamed of sitting on your couch? Because motion is so interwoven into the fabric of dreams it is very wise to learn to incorporate it into your visualizations.
8. *Try a Kinesthetic Approach*. For this method, you just need to imagine how your body would feel if you were performing some particularly sense-oriented activity. The activity could be anything from walking barefoot on the beach to tending your garden. Imagine what

all the textures would feel like. Feel the sand between your toes, the weight of your body as you walk, the smell of the ocean, and anything else you would be experiencing. The more you can cultivate a kinesthetic sense of how it would be and how you would be sensing it, the better. By focusing your awareness and your senses on a particular experience, you increase the odds of actually cultivating imagery that will match your kinesthetically sensed experience. Because of this tendency, this technique is very effective at cultivating imagery, and it is even more effective when attempting to incubate a particular dream.

All these techniques can help if you are faced with a visual blank. As always, try them out and see what works best for you. The crucial underlying lesson is to engrain the fact that losing your visuals does not mean that you are done with your lucid excursion. By learning and mastering these methods you will prolong your lucid dreams, and in turn you be able to turn one lucid dream into a long series of them. This will maximize your lucid dreaming progress by allowing you to get more experience per night.

Limbo-Land

Having repeatedly lost my dream sight, I have become intimately acquainted with the visionless terrain I refer to it as Limbo-Land because you enter an in-between state. It is a twilight zone of sorts where you have no sight, yet you have complete awareness. You are fully conscious in an empty void. It is completely dark and black much like a cave or a womb. You feel suspended in this place, if you want to call it a place. Some people are not too comfortable being alone in the dark, but I assure you that the only thing that can harm you is your fear. Being in the void you should feel at peace. It is a wonderful place to meditate and contemplate. There is little sense of time aside from the current moment, and you have very little bodily awareness. The experience is best described as feeling like you are just a point of awareness suspended somewhere in a timeless void.

At first it may be a little strange for you because there is really no other comparison to it in our waking world unless you have ever been fully conscious in a trance-like state. Your first few lucid blackouts may be a little unsettling, but with time you will become more accustomed to this Limbo-Land. Eventually you will take comfort in knowing that you are in a familiar region of the Lucid Dream Terrain. Limbo-Land is like a regrouping zone where you restore your dreaming energy and relax while you wait for the next episode of your lucid adventure to develop. It is a perfect time to re-lucidify your awareness. Reminding yourself that you are dreaming and engraining the fact that you will remain fully conscious helps to set the stage for further lucid action once visuals begin to appear. It is like taking a timeout to recoup your senses.

Limbo-Land is also a perfect place to incubate a dream as well as an ideal place for creative brainstorming and problem solving. If you have a particular place or person you would like to visit, you can think of that person while you are in Limbo-Land. Hopefully, your next sequence of dreams will incorporate that person or place. Also, if you have an unsolved problem or any unsettled concerns, you can pose this question or dilemma and ask that a solution be manifested in the next dream. If you are a writer, you could incubate a dream that will help you write your next chapter. If you are an artist, you could incubate a dream containing your next painting or sculpture before you have even made it in the waking world. Limbo-Land is the ultimate place for getting help directly from your subconscious. Later on, we will discuss some of the practical applications that lucid dreaming can have on your daily life, and Limbo-Land is one of the ideal places to take advantage of these lucid opportunities.

In most cases you enter Limbo-Land by accident. Whenever you completely lose your vision while

remaining fully conscious, you immediately cross over into Limbo-Land. Usually it is an accidental crossing, but other times it may be a natural course of events. For example, you might be losing your ability to remain lucid. This fading awareness may black out your vision, and you will then be instantly teleported into Limbo-Land. Sometimes you may even intentionally enter Limbo-Land. It is as simple as closing your dream eyes and intending your visuals to disappear. Once your sight disappears, you've entered Limbo-Land, and from there you can incubate a new dream, do some problem solving, meditate or anything your hearts desires.

The process of incubating a particular dream from Limbo-Land is quite simple. You continue to maintain full awareness, decide what you would to like to experience, focus your awareness and intent upon whatever it is that you would like to incubate and then simply wait for some new visuals to appear. It usually only takes a minute or so before some images begin to flash and fade in front of you. Scenery, faces, buildings, and other random imagery may come into view. Just allow it all to happen and hold onto the awareness that you are still dreaming. After these images flicker upon the darkness of your surroundings eventually you will be smack dab in the middle of a brand new dreamscape. Hopefully, the dreamscape you were attempting to incubate. Sometimes there is no flashing imagery at all. From one second to the next, you go from being suspended in the complete darkness of Limbo-Land to standing or flying through a completely developed dreamscape. Other times when your dream sight is restored your surroundings may be a little grainy or out of focus. If this is the case, just stand there and allow them to stabilize and clarify. If they don't, you can always say to yourself, "Increase Clarity, Now!!!". That will usually do the trick. After your vision is back, you are free to go about your lucid business.

There seems to be a cycle that takes place while you are lucid dreaming. You become lucid and attempt to prolong your lucidity. You get better at being able to remain lucid. You find that most of your lucid dreams come to an end not due to losing your lucidity but by you losing your vision, and this aborts the dream. By taking advantage of Limbo-Land and not awakening once you lose your dream sight, you open the doors to the endless possibilities of lengthened lucidity. Instead of having a lucid dream and then awakening, you will begin to have series of lucid dreams in a row. Going from one lucid dream and then reentering again and again into successive adventures will increase your experience exponentially. With some practice you could have sequences of seven or more lucid dreams in a row. Being able to maximize your lucid dream reentries without losing your lucidity is a crucial skill if you want to achieve mastery levels of prolonging lucidity.

Surprisingly, very few other authors on the subject of lucid dreaming have ever mentioned this technique. Whether or not they make use of Limbo-Land or whether or not they have methods to restore their lost visuals remains to be seen, but as far as I can tell, this is one of the greatest assets that a lucid dreamer can use to maximize his or her progress. Becoming familiar with Limbo-Land allows you to equate losing visuals with entering a different zone of the Lucid Terrain as opposed to the normal conclusion which would be to assume that the lucid dream is over and that it is time to awaken. There is another related zone that I refer to as Launch-Land that we'll discuss later when we go over how to induce an out of body experience from a lucid dream state. The key to your success is found in your familiarity with these zones. The more you get accustomed to them, the more you can repeatedly and consistently take advantage of their unique properties and prolong your lucid experiences at the same time.

Confronting Fear and Dream Dangers

Fear is by far one of the largest obstacles to overcome in anyone's lifetime. If you allow it, fear will prevent you from many valuable experiences and force you to cower when you should be giving it your best shot. Because fear is such a restrictive force in both waking and dreaming worlds we need to go over the best ways to keep unnecessary fears from holding you hostage. Lucid dreaming allows the dreamer to engage directly with a fully interactive dreamscape that is of his or her own creation. As wonderful as your dreams can be, there are times when these thoughtscapes may become equally frightening. Delving into the realm of the subconscious may lead to direct confrontation with many of your hidden fears. No matter how fearless you think you are, it is one thing to talk the talk and quite another thing to walk the walk. You can tell yourself that you are not scared of heights until you are blue in the face, but when it comes down to it, if you were scaling the tallest mountain in the world would you be scared? There is no way to ever know until you actually do it, and that is where your dreams can act as the ultimate catalyst. You can experience things in your dreams that you would never encounter in your normal waking world, and this can be for the better or for the worse.

If fear of heights is your fright, imagine yourself teetering on a cliff that is twenty times the size of Mount Everest. Dreams can provide you with the raw experiences that will allow you to realize whether or not you have what it takes. Dreams can allow you the opportunity to transcend your fears. The beauty of dreaming is that compared to the vast amount of experience you can access, there are so few negative repercussions. If you had fallen from a mile-high cliff in your dream, you would not have harmed yourself. Certainly a dream seems as real as "real" can be while you are in one, but luckily for us dreamers there is basically no sensation of pain while dreaming. I've experienced so many "should be" painful things while dreaming. I've been slapped, punched, crunched, jabbed, stabbed, shot, exploded, poisoned, and more, but never have I felt the slightest amount of pain. The closest sensation to pain is a strange numbness you may feel in the area where you should be feeling the pain. In dreams you have all the bonuses of being able to experience anything yet no chance of getting hurt. Even something dangerously exciting like skydiving or swimming with sharks could be accomplished while knowing that you have nothing to fear. Dreams would have to be the only place where if your parachute didn't open, you could save yourself by knitting a new one on the way down instead of plummeting to your death.

The quote, " You have nothing to fear but fear itself" perfectly summarizes the dream realm. It is so incredibly important to internalize this idea that I'll say it again. The only thing that can harm you is the fear itself. Paradoxically, in many cases it is fear that you fear. It is the fear that makes you terrified, yet it is this same terror that you fear. Like a dog chasing its tail the cycle perpetuates itself as long as you keep feeding into it. Herein lies the answer to overcoming any fears that you may encounter in both dreaming and waking worlds. Don't feed into the cycle of fear at all. It is the flowing of uncontrolled fearful thoughts that will manifest into fearful experiences. Whenever you sense the presence of fear, all you need to do is analyze the reason for the fear and act upon it.

Use fear as an indicator that productive action is required. Acting upon it may be as simple as changing the way you are currently viewing something. As was the case with the Gravity/Density Principle, you can rethink your stance and change your perspective. Using the "observer effect" to redefine any fearful situation can help you ease you way through a would-be terrifying event. In your dreams you will be able to experience this phenomenon directly. Because your thoughts are an integrated part of the dream realm itself, fearful thoughts will manifest into fearful experiences. Believe me, it won't take you long to discover how important it is to control your thoughts and your intent while dreaming. Working with your

dreams will give you endless opportunities to confront and deal with fear. This kind of hands on training will allow you to put fear in its place in both your waking and dreaming worlds because you will gain a better knowledge of how to handle yourself and your thoughts in stressful dream scenarios.

The Two Step Process of Fear Maintenance

As your experience in the lucid dream realm increases you will be more and more skilled at remaining cool-headed in heated situations. There may never be a day when fear disappears entirely but you can look forward to developing better ways of handling it when it rears its ugly head. I've found a two step process that is ideal for handling any uncontrollable, fear-inducing thought forms. You can use these two steps to deal with any fear that you may encounter in your dreams.

The first step when confronted with fear is to do a reality check. Take an analytical look around to determine if you are dreaming. The bonus to this step is that it will become a natural reflex to perform a reality check whenever you are facing fear in a non-lucid dream, and this will result in more lucid dreams. Hopefully, after the first step you have determined that you are dreaming. For step two, you need to maintain your lucidity by stating to yourself that you are fully aware that you are dreaming, and since you are dreaming you have nothing to fear but the fear itself. Nothing can harm you except your fearful thoughts. Become grounded in the fact that this is your dream, and ultimately YOU are in control. You are the one who determines how you are going to react in your dream. The key lies in realizing that you are only scaring yourself, setting up a scary trap and falling for it! You can turn what was a terrifying moment into something humorous or even joyous. These two steps will really come in handy whenever you are face to face with some unruly dream character. Even that menacing ten-foot tall gorilla would give you a hug if you weren't so frightened of him. You just need to rethink your relationship to him and remove any traces of fear.

The Power of Laughter

One great way to put fear in its place is to laugh at it, and call its bluff. Once the fear knows that you view it as nothing, it becomes exactly that and vanishes entirely. The following scenario outlines the best way to handle any fear in your dreams. You dream you are walking down the street and two figures approach you. They intimidate you and attempt to harass you in some way or worse yet they threaten to rob you or do you bodily harm. You feel fear. You do a reality check and realize that you are dreaming. Instead of being frightened you are now ecstatic to realize that you are lucid, but those assailants will have none of your happiness in their presence. They come at you, and for a brief second you are scared until you come to your senses and realize that you cannot be harmed in your own dream. Now, you laugh at them and explain to them that this is just a dream, and they better look for someone who is afraid of them because you are not. When confronted with your laughter they run away and leave you alone. They may even apologize and attempt to befriend you, or they may join you in your laughter. This is a very typical and simple way of handling of what could have been a frightening encounter.

The Power of Love

Another great way to combat fear is to use the power of love. It may sound silly but this is probably the most effective way of dissolving any conflicts. It is true in both waking and dreaming worlds, and although it is a little harder to practice in the waking world it still usually does the trick. Let's take the previous dream situation and show how the power of love could have been applied. After you got scared, did the reality check, and became lucid you would tell your assailants that you love them. Express to

them that they are merely figments of your subconscious that are calling out for attention. Tell them that you accept them and want them to feel the love you have for them and every other part of yourself. Odds are that you will never see two assailants run off so fast in your life! In a best case scenario they will become your steadfast dream friends. In either case, you have transcended the fear by turning a negative situation into a positive one.

Your success will result from a proper handling of fear. Hopefully, by applying these tips you will be more prepared than scared whenever fear comes knocking at your mind. You must also keep in mind that fear is not the enemy. It is the inability to deal with fear that becomes your worst enemy. Fear itself is a natural biological response mechanism. It is not an evil thing. It is merely a reflex that indicates that some immediate action needs to be taken. Instead of having fear be a cue to panic, you should use it as an indicator to take action. As you get better at dealing with your fears you will open yourself to a myriad of wondrous experiences. The more you confront and handle it, the more courageous and fearless you will become. While lucid dreaming you may have many wonderful moments characterized by fearlessness, but also keep in mind that being fearless doesn't mean being reckless, stupid, or cocky. It means being so accepted and secure within yourself that you have more faith in yourself than doubt.

Stabilizing Your Surroundings

When making your way through a dreamscape sometimes you will find that your surroundings are not all that stable. It could be that the ground is not very solid. Maybe the background imagery is flat, or maybe your surroundings are mutating. Having a stable dreamscape is important for many reasons. If your dream surroundings are wavering and unstable you may find it hard to navigate through your dream, and your lucidity may be compromised in the process. For example, you could be flying over a field as the ground beneath you starts to gyrate and flicker at differing heights. Having an unstable ground can be very disorienting for a dreamer. It can even lead to a complete visual blackout. It is hard enough in the beginning to maintain your lucidity for extended periods without having to deal with a wobbly, wavering dreamscape. Learning how to stabilize your surroundings will help you salvage many lucid adventures that may have ended prematurely due to the instability of the dreamscape.

There are a few different reasons why your dream may destabilize. By flying too fast and violating the Speed to Altitude Ratio the ground simply can't keep up with your flight speed. As a result, the whole dreamscape becomes fractured into choppy visuals or grainy, flickering imagery. Another cause of destabilization happens if you become overly excited. Many rambling thoughts coupled with an unfocused awareness often leads to instability. The basic rule of thumb should be to slow down! Whenever your surroundings become distorted just relax and take a few deep breaths. Collect yourself and re-solidify your lucidity then once you are ready to proceed without losing your lucidity, you can simply use your intent to stabilize your environment. You could say, "Stabilize surroundings, now!". Once you follow these steps the foundational fabric of your dream should become more solid and begin to take on a much more realistic nature.

To re-stabilize your dream surroundings, the idea is to focus your awareness, intend stability and then ease yourself into the newly solidifying surroundings. Remember the idea is to slow down so if you jump right into action before the surroundings have a chance to solidify you may have to repeat the process all over again. It usually only takes a few moments for the dreamscape to become stabilized again. As long as you are confident that you can interact in the new dreamscape without losing your lucidity you are free to go about your dreaming. By using this technique you can prolong many of your lucid dreams and not

fall into the normal trap of panicking and awakening. It will also come in handy when you start exploring some advanced lucid techniques like dream reentry from Limbo-Land and especially when inducing the heightened levels of lucidity that we will discuss in a later section.

OTHER THINGS YOU MAY ENCOUNTER on THE LUCID TERRAIN

Dream friends and Dream Guides/Teachers

You will encounter and interact with many different characters in your dreams. Some will be people you know in your waking life like your friends or your family. Other dream characters will be people you have never met aside from the dream, yet surprisingly you may often feel that you have known this person for many years. Upon awakening you may find that you don't really share a waking past with this person. This strange phenomenon even occurs in lucid dreams. I have had many lucid experiences with people who I thought I had known, yet in retrospect I would realize that they were just dream friends. I am not meaning to belittle the importance of dream friends and their role in dreams, it is amazing how much the interactions with these characters can teach us about ourselves. I am trying to emphasize the strangely paradoxical feeling that you can know these dream people so well yet have never spent a waking moment with them. It is very similar to a deja-vu experience where you sense that you have been some place before, yet your logical, rational mind argues that you have not. In any case, whether in lucid or non-lucid dreams, you can use the help of these dream characters to make the most of your dreaming experience, and you make some wonderful friends along the way.

By interacting with the characters in your dreams you can get information, directions, and insights that may have not been so easily extracted if you were working alone. For example, in your lucid dreams if you are looking for someone or something, you can ask a dream character to go find that someone or something. This allows you to continue with your immediate experience and not have to waste your precious lucid dreamtime searching for someone or something. Also, if you have a problem that needs solving in the dream or even in your waking life, you can send a dream friend to find an authority on whatever the subject may be. For example, if you were debating how to structure a written proposal you could send for a dream editor. The advice from these dream advisors is often right on the mark. In fact, some dreamers have developed relationships with particular dream characters. Finding and establishing a dream friendship with a wise mentor can lead to some wise advice for the rest of your waking life. Some dreamers can continually call upon these recurrent guides whenever they are needed.

Cultivating a relationship with your dream guide can be very rewarding. Keep in mind that you can find information and insight from a wide variety of characters in your dreams even if they aren't old, bearded and wearing a robe. Looking for guidance everywhere is a great way to increase your chances of finding it. I do not have one recurrent guide, but I have had many different dream teachers. Some have reappeared in my dreams at various times when they were needed. Lately, I will often have dreams in a classroom-like setting with a group of people that are symbiotically interacting. The more advanced will teach me for a while and then I will help those that are not quite as learned as myself. Often, I would dream of sitting in classrooms being taught dream-related concepts, yet rarely do I ever have the same teacher twice so don't be too strict on the guidelines that you set for finding some dream guidance.

On the different note, just because someone approaches you and plays the role of teacher you should use common sense and not just sheepishly follow their advice. Some characters will seem to have agendas of their own that may not include your best interests. They may be testing your inner strength and your inner reliance. By unwittingly accepting and following their advice you may wind up learning a lesson

the hard way. Sometimes these tricksters just want to test your mettle. By talking to dream characters you should be able to determine whether they are worthy of your time. Ask your guides about their credentials and inquire about their guiding philosophies. After a good screening, you can use your best judgement.

To summon a dream guide or teacher is usually as simple as remembering to do so in your dream. You just intend to find a guide, and as they say, if the student is ready the teacher will appear. Sometimes as mentioned I will ask other dream characters to bring a guide to me, and I've found that this is a great way to make contacts. Either the person will return with a guide or I will naturally encounter the guide within moments of intending to summon one. Upon receiving help or advice from your guide, be sure to thank him or her and ask if they would be willing to help you in the future if you were to summon them again. Showing gratitude is extremely important, and you may even want to ask if there is any way you can be of service. This type of courtesy keeps the welcome doors open for any future visits.

There are so many ways that a dream guide can help you that I'll just list some of the more common ones, and from those you should be able to think of many more on your own. They can help you find people you would like to speak with like your cousin who lives on the other side of the country or even a deceased loved one. They can come to your aid if you are in trouble by repelling any possible assailants that may be bothering you. They can talk to you about a certain person or an issue that is important to you, and they can offer practical advice on how to solve a situation or dilemma. They can help you tap your creativity by showing you possible future projects that you can manifest into "reality". For example, I have been to an art gallery where I have seen magnificent ideas for paintings that I could produce in my waking world. They can help you heal yourself or your loved ones simply by enlisting their help as other-worldly healing assistants. You can ask them to assist you through a troubling time in your waking life. Their power to help you is only limited by your imagination and your belief in them.

I prefer to view them as dream wizards who are capable of making dreams come true. Whether these helpers are parts of myself or not seems irrelevant. They could be called dream teachers or guides or guardian angels or even aspects of your Higher Self, but the semantics are not as important as the fact that they do exist and can be exceptionally helpful. Once you begin to interact with them you can decide how you would like to refer to them. The bottom line is that they can provide a way to accelerate your progress, increase your dream control, and begin to expand your belief systems into the realms of Impossibly Possible.

Interaction with your Higher Self

With the New Age movement gathering so much momentum over the last several years, the term Higher Self has developed into a common buzzword. In this book I've tried to stray away from endorsing any particular dogmas because the focus should be on learning the ropes of lucid dreaming. After that you will have a better frame of reference with which to decide how you care to interpret these experiences. However, one thing that resoundingly echoes through the lucid terrain is that some kind of integrated self-communication is occurring.

You can interpret it from a simple psychological viewpoint and label it as interaction between your conscious and subconscious mind. You could view it as a Freudian forum between your Id, Ego, and SuperEgo or you might take a Jungian approach and view it as an archetypal interconnecting between you and the universal Cosmic Consciousness. You may conclude that it is a communion between your Self and your Higher Self. Actually, depending on your religious upbringing and your current belief

systems there are endless ways that you could interpret what is taking place when you are lucid dreaming. I can only speak from my experience which points to the fact that something is in fact taking place that loosely corresponds to all of the aforementioned viewpoints.

With the many experiences I have had, I have no alternative but to accept this phenomenon as something that is both extremely promising and exceptionally unique. I think that this interfacing must be occurring at some profoundly deep levels. I say this because I have experienced the wonder of what seems to be repeatable access to an unfathomable reservoir of assistance, insight, information, and creativity. There seems to be an ability to quickly come up with answers and solutions that normally wouldn't flow so freely. This has led me to view these experiences as opportunities to think holistically and chances to use more of your mind than waking conditions will allow. You may view it in whatever terms you choose, but the undeniable point is that there is definitely some access allowed to a larger part of "you". Call it your sub-conscious or your Higher Self, you are tapping into something, and there are ways to allow this something to provide you with what you are seeking.

My experience has consistently shown that there is a part of me that has a greater ability to solve problems and come up with ideas that would have alluded my normal waking mind. There must obviously be some kind of impediments in our waking consciousness that prevents us from operating at maximum processing speed. It could be some residues of repressed fear, preoccupations of daily concerns, or the filtering of belief systems, but one thing is certain.; You have all the answers in you right now. You just need to know how to open up and let them out into the light of your awareness, and lucid dreaming is a marvelous vehicle for developing this kind of interaction.

"In sleep, no longer exposed to the noise of culture, we become awake to what we really feel and think. The genuine self can talk: it is often more intelligent and more decent than the pseudo self which seems to be "we" when we are awake."

Erich Fromm, from *The Nature of Dreams*

The Power of Surrender

One great way to bypass your waking limitations is to develop the ability to surrender. Many people have such a stigmatized view of the term "surrender" that it is equated with losing, defeat, and failure. The irony is that we all carry around so much useless mental baggage that we should consider it a blessing to be able to temporarily discard all the limiting beliefs and thought forms that hinder our development. This is the kind of surrender that allows us to transcend our mental barriers. This is the type of surrender that we need to embrace not fear.

If we have already established the existence of a more integrated force that has better access to our mind and our problem-solving abilities, wouldn't it make sense to allow this other "something" to develop and become more useful to us? I liken it to developing self-confidence and your intuition. You are more than you allow yourself to realize. For whatever reason, we have doubt and insecurities about our abilities instead of actively engaging and developing them. Learning and applying the power of surrender allows us to transcend barriers that may have been impassible.

In your lucid dreams you can apply this principle in a number of ways. As your lucid dreaming ability progresses, you will learn how to have better dream control. Almost all of the techniques in this book are

based upon developing your dream control. For example, becoming lucid in a dream, being able to maintain your lucidity, restoring lost visuals, and even your flying abilities are crucial control-based skills that will help you in many dream scenarios, but there are times when dream control can be limiting. It is rather ironic that you learn all this dream control only to discover that in the end there is a great need to surrender control. For example, upon becoming lucid in a dream you have a world of endless possibilities at your fingertips. As your ability to control your dreams increases you can choose to experience just about anything that you can imagine, but sometimes you need to allow the dream to take its natural course. Instead of applying techniques to change a dream you may learn even more if you just go with the flow and encounter and react to whatever comes your way.

This surrendering of control can lead to unexpected insights that may not have occurred if you had been more controlling over your dream. For example, if you are looking for an answer or solution to a particular problem you can ask for the solution to appear to you in your dream, but you need to surrender and accept whatever answers appear. I don't mean that you blindly accept whatever solution comes to mind, but don't rule any out just yet either. The point is to surrender to the authority of a higher source and become open to the solutions as opposed to fighting the problem and trying to force a solution.

The process of surrender is a wonderful way to bypass any limiting belief systems. Many times we push away the answers by having preconceived notions as to how the problem should be solved, and these preconceptions may block the real solution from being noticed because it doesn't fit into our expected parameters. Allowing your preconceptions to be temporarily shelved can create a new angle of perspective. This new view may lead to previously unforeseen solutions. Surrendering to a higher source can open up the doors that your waking mind may be keeping under lock and key. The next time you are looking for answers, you should try posing the problem, surrendering to this higher source and then allowing the solution to come to you. It usually works like a charm especially in the dream realm.

NVC: Non-Verbal Communication

Communication in dreams usually occurs just as it does in waking life, but there are times when you will experience forms of non-verbal communication. I am not talking about facial expressions or physical gestures although these will also be present. The non-verbal communication found at times in your dreams is best described as some form of telepathic communication that occurs between you and another character. It reminds me of a sci-fi book by Ray Bradbury or maybe it was a Twilight Zone episode. There is a group of people who encounter some other-worldly entity. They can all understand the being, yet they all speak different languages. When one of the characters asks another to repeat what was said by the entity, the person says what he heard, but the wording is different with all of them. The meaning was unchanged but it was processed by each person and converted into the best words that they would use to convey the message's meaning. Many times in your dreams you will experience this kind of thought transfer.

This type of communication is very effective because you can receive vast quantities of information in small periods of time. It also provides very accurate thought transmission. Due to semantic difficulties sometimes the little nuances of thoughts can be misinterpreted when using words. By transmitting or receiving whole thoughts and concepts, there is little room for misinterpretation. Many writers have described this holistic form of communication. One author, Robert Monroe, the out-of-body researcher, referred to these mental transfers as rote balls. He would receive a rote from some character, and then he would open it mentally and understand as much of it as he could. Sometimes these rotes could not be

opened all at once, or there were reasons why he couldn't fully absorb the message. Usually this was because he was not yet ready to fully understand the rote so he would return to it later and hopefully be better able to decipher its message. Other people have described very similar "thought balls" or "mind-sharing sessions" which seems to indicate that it is a fairly common procedure.

I usually experience this kind of communication as a form of mental sharing. It is as if I am sending and receiving thoughts from someone else, yet it seems completely natural and normal to "talk" this way. When it happens it usually seems so commonplace that it is not even second-guessed or noticed as being unusual. A lot of normal dreams contain this kind of non-vernal communication, but the dreamer does not possess the ability to critically analyze the experience so there is no awareness of the fact that it is anything but normal. When you are lucid in a dream these "thought-versations" can be very mind-expanding to say the least. Being conscious of the fact that you are telepathically communicating with someone can be a very thrilling experience. Even if it is a dream albeit a lucid one, the process of thought transference usually is a magical and mysterious experience.

The process itself is so simple that you really do not even need to learn how to do it. It is as easy as thinking and listening with your mind for replies. In fact the only thing you need to do in order to experience it is to remember to try it when you become lucid. It comes in handy when you encounter a dream character who does not speak your language or when dealing with anyone that you cannot understand. Just ask them to enter into a thought-sharing session. This usually clears up any misunderstandings. During your telepathic conversation you may see images and pictures that are somehow processed as fully formed thoughts. You may just immediately know without hearing words. You may even hear words but not see any lips moving.

For me, it is usually a process of shared imagery. It is like having a bunch of flashing pictures flicker before your mind's eye, yet the images contain meanings that all are interwoven to create an overall message. The message just conveys itself however it does all by itself. The only thing needed is for you to be receptive. The meaning is usually processed exactly as it is without any need for further interpretation. The message itself is the meaning. It is the interpretation. That is why it is such a pure and unadulterated form of communication because it doesn't need to rely on words that can sometimes be ambiguous, misleading or misinterpreted.

Sleep Paralysis

As your body winds down for a good night's sleep, your brainwaves slow down, and your body prepares to go into a shutdown mode. In fact, by the time that you are ready to enter into REM sleep and do some dreaming, your body has become mostly paralyzed. Your eyes are still capable of darting around behind your eyelids, but the rest of your body goes into a paralytic state. This makes complete sense when you imagine how dangerous it would be if your physical body acted out whatever it was that you were dreaming. As a natural defense mechanism, sleep paralysis takes place in order to keep your limbs from flaying about during your nightly excursions into the dream realm. In most cases, you would never know that your body is paralyzed from your head down to your toes unless of course you become conscious of yourself being in your paralyzed body during this condition of sleep paralysis.

When you consciously experience sleep paralysis, you may react fearfully to the situation. Being filled with anxiety upon discovering that you cannot move your body is a common experience. It may not seem like something that warrants such frightful reactions, but I must admit that I have had many a spooky moment upon realizing I was in full blown sleep paralysis mode. The first fear is one of being trapped.

Not being able to move can be frightening enough, but to make matters even more intense there is often a feeling that there is a presence in the room with you.

This presence of another entity in the room has been reported cross-culturally by many people. It is even the basis of much folklore that has been passed down through the ages. For example, legend has it that you can be visited by the "Old Hag" who comes into your room when you are sleeping and sits on top of you. You awaken to find that you are fully conscious and completely unable to move with some "thing" on top of you. Similar stories exist involving succubus and/or incubus spirits that prey on the sleeping. Other legends speak of the "night-mare" whose terrifying visits have coined our modern term. I've experienced this presence and being unable to protect myself did make it rather frightful, but I find it more reasonable to explain this experience as a side-effect of the sleep paralysis and not some malevolent being that is stalking me in my bedroom. The fact that you sense a presence in the room with you does not imply that this other entity is intent upon harming you in your paralytic state.

Aside from being paralyzed and feeling a presence, you may also hear noises in the room. Popping, crackling, and fizzing sounds are frequently reported. One time I heard a female voice that hovered through the room. It was so crisp and clear and life-like that it was impossible to tell if it was "real" or imagined. You may experience hallucinatory images. For example, whenever it happens to me I am usually in my room lying in my bed and I am capable of seeing my room perfectly, yet my physical eyes are closed. This ability to see through closed eyelids is a very common feature whenever you become conscious during sleep paralysis. The room may have some physical alteration like an extra window or a minor rearrangement of the furniture, but the overall experience is that you can actually see even though your physical eyes are closed.

Although your physical body is paralyzed, you may still be able to feel your physical body. Your bodily sensation may range from a mild numbness to complete feeling of your immobile body. Contraction and/or expansion of what you perceive to be your physical body is also commonly reported. Sometimes you can simultaneously sense your physical body as well as what would best be described as your dream-body. Having awareness of two bodies is quite a remarkable experience to say the least. Some people including myself feel waves that ripple through their physical body. The body may feel like it is vibrating or humming at different rates. This vibrational state is an excellent launching pad for lucid dreams as well as out-of-body experiences. Many people report that they experience this vibrational state just prior to lifting out of their physical body. Having an awareness of these vibrations means that you are becoming largely dissociated from your physical body. If you are seeing and feeling things that could not be happening in "reality", it is a perfect time to launch into a lucid dream or attempt to induce an out-of-body experience as we will discuss in a future section.

Luckily, being conscious during sleep paralysis is not a common event, but it does occasionally happen, and when it does you should be prepared for it. When it first happened to me, I was not familiar with sleep paralysis so it was a rather scary experience. Hopefully, you will have more information and insight on the topic so you will be better equipped to deal with the situation. Most importantly, the biggest obstacle to overcome is fear. As mentioned when we covered fear earlier, it is all in your mind. Fear breeds on fear so if you start to get frightful just remember that you cannot be harmed. Try to take some relaxing breaths and allow the experience to pass. Fighting and struggling with a paralyzed body only creates fear and confusion.

If you want to abort the experience altogether and wake up in your bed, all you need to do is focus on

moving just one part of your body. You could start by concentrating on one of your fingers or toes. Once you begin to actually move it, have patience and realize that paralysis is not something that ends immediately. It is more of a time-release process whereby your body slowly becomes mobile. Many moments of distress arise when a dreamer panics and fails to realize that it takes some time for the effects to completely subside (usually about a minute or so). After you regain the ability to move a finger or a toe, slowly begin to move all your fingers or toes and then move on to your other body parts. Eventually, you will be freed from the grips of this atonic state.

Over time you should become better equipped to handle your fears when they arise and this should lead to a better handling of sleep paralysis. In fact, the best thing to do is to remain conscious and not attempt to awaken from this condition. This once fearful state can be developed into an ideal launching pad for lucid dreams. The idea is to use this peculiar altered state as a sign to induce a lucid dream. This condition is an ideal springboard into a lucid dream because you are already in an altered state of consciousness. You have left much of your mental baggage at your nightstand if you are already sleeping. The whole scenario of being conscious during sleep paralysis is so closely related to dreaming that in some cases it is interpreted as just that, a crazy dream. All that is needed to turn this situation into a full blown lucid dream is for you to consciously intend to teleport yourself into any dreamscape. You can even enlist the help of the presence. The presence you feel can be viewed as one of your dream guides. Simply striking up a conversation with this presence can lead to some very interesting things.

Whenever I find myself in this state, first I will relax and dispel my fears. After confidently surrendering to the experience I will sense the presence not as a menacing phantom but as a friend and an assistant. This sets a much better tone for the overall experience. I will then ask this presence to help me create a positive experience. Sometimes I will ask this presence to assist me in creating a new dreamscape that I could enter into with my dreambody. Usually, I will be able to enlist the help of this presence to help me get directly "out" of my physical body. What happens next is best described as an out-of-body experience. One moment I'll be experiencing sleep paralysis and the next moment, I will be hovering "out' of my physical body into my actual bedroom. I may just stand up, roll over or pop right out of my physical body depending on the situation, and the next thing I know I am having an out-of-body experience. We'll go over out-of-body experiences and how to induce them from a lucid dream in a future section. For now, it will suffice to say that it is an extremely intense experience.

False Awakenings

You will definitely encounter a lot of false awakenings along your dreaming trails. They are far more common than becoming conscious during sleep paralysis. False awakenings occur when you think that you have awakened from a dream only to discover that you are still dreaming. This happens so frequently that you will definitely get a chance to experience them if you have not already. It is important to address the topic because they are probably the easiest way to catch yourself dreaming and transform it into a lucid dream. It is as simple as being on guard for them and then realizing you are having one to become lucid. Upon awakening every day I always assume that it could be a false awakening. This habit transfers over into my false awakenings so I rarely miss the opportunity to convert them into lucid dreams.

Here is a common scenario. You wake up and go about your morning routine. My routine includes lying in bed for a while and recalling my dreams and maybe sharing them with my wife. So I do this but since this is a false awakening I am in that non-critical, semi-illogical mind frame which makes it hard to discern waking from dreaming "reality". More than likely, my false awakenings happen when I have just

had a lucid dream and I am excitedly sharing it when I realize that it is not over just yet. Being trained to be on the lookout for false awakenings helps fine tune your sense to spot the bizarre when you normally would just continue with the scenario and lapse into a non-lucid dream. Having regained your lucidity you are now at the beginning of a brand new opportunity to explore the lucid dream realm.

Even if you have a false awakening after a non-lucid dream, the process is still the same. The point is that you need to be on guard. The false awakening can seem so real that you would never think to question whether you are still dreaming. You may even mentally go through a checklist of all the things that you need to do that day, but don't be misled. Many mornings I have awakened from a false awakening only to say to myself, "How could I not have realized it was a false awakening?!?!". The only sure-fire way to catch these false awakenings and transform them into lucid dreams is to make a habit of assuming that you are still dreaming every time you awaken. No matter how real it may seem, check and double check your surroundings to determine if you are not still dreaming. Luckily, with time and experience you will have more and more false awakenings. Getting accustomed to these pseudo-wake ups, you will find that they are one of the easiest ways to become lucid.

X. BEYOND ADVANCED LEVEL TECHNIQUES

So you're getting pretty good at lucid dreaming. You're getting better at spotting the bizarre and becoming lucid in your dreams. Not only that, you are able to maintain your lucidity and prolong your lucid dreams for longer periods of time. These next few techniques are best utilized by advanced and advancing lucid dreamers. While these methods are rather advanced, you can still experiment with them regardless of your lucid dreaming prowess. It may not help you to attempt to heighten your lucidity if you are not capable of maintaining it in the first place, but if you want to shoot for the moon, be my guest. You may just get a fleeting taste that makes you want to come back for more, or better yet, you may succeed and make some quantum leaps in your lucid dreaming progress.

If you find that you are in way above your head when trying these methods, don't feel bad just keep going forward at your own pace. Everyone struggles with the first few minutes of maintained lucidity, but over time those lucid minutes begin to mount. As I mentioned these are rather specialized techniques and if you don't have success with them at first, don't give up. Just remember to try them again later when you may be better equipped to take advantage of them.

Heightening your Lucidity

There is lots of talk about becoming lucid and maintaining your lucidity, but seldom does anyone speak of consciously trying to increase their levels of lucidity. Just like anything else your lucidity can be more or less intense depending on the circumstance. Sometimes you may be mildly lucid in a dream and have little dream control while other times you can become so intensely, overwhelmingly lucid that it may be hard to handle. I have little to offer in the way of explaining why your lucidity levels may vary in intensity, but it is safe to say that they do differ from dream to dream and maybe even from dreamer to dreamer. The point is that you can learn how to heighten your level of lucidity whenever it is losing intensity, and you can progressively increase the levels of lucidity you are able to handle without becoming overwhelmed and waking up as a result. Heightening your lucidity can lead to some profoundly intense experiences.

The process is very simple, but the difficulty lies in your ability to handle this heightened lucidity. Whenever you are in a lucid dream and want to heighten your lucidity, there are two things you need to do. First, you need to become grounded in your lucidity. You should feel very comfortable and confident in your ability to maintain the level of lucidity you are currently experiencing. It is hard to describe exactly, but the idea is to know that you are capable of prolonging your lucidity at its current level before you start intending any increase. If you increase your lucidity prematurely without being properly grounded, you may find the increase in lucidity will rattle your lucid dreamscape. Literally, the ground beneath you may start to sway or flicker. The colors in the sky may get brilliantly intense. So intense that you may lose your lucidity by gazing into the colors. One moment you'll be lucid; the next moment you'll be mesmerized by the beauty of your surroundings, and in so doing you will no longer be lucid. You will not even know your lucidity is lost because you will be fully immersed in your new non-lucid dream. Premature heightening usually leads to a dream situation where you cannot maintain stability of your surroundings. As a result, you will most likely lose your visuals. Luckily, you have already learned how to restore lost visuals so that should not be too much of a set-back, but in any case, it is a waste of lucid time to be acting prematurely and risk getting such a setback albeit a salvageable one. Plus, by acting prematurely you may wind up unable to handle the excessive levels of lucidity and as a result you will completely awaken from the lucid dream.

After you have become comfortably grounded in your lucidity, the second step is to intend an increase in your level of lucidity. You can use the Verbal Command Method and simply say, "Increase Levels of Lucidity, Now!". Being a firm follower of the Verbal Command Method, this is the technique I use, and it works like a charm. If you don't feel comfortable using this method, you could use the power of intent or you could even use the power of expectation. By intending and expecting you should get the same result, a heightened level of lucidity. To further increase your lucidity you just repeat both steps over again. Becoming grounded in your new increased level of lucidity and then intending another increase. There may be no limit to how intensely heightened your lucidity can be, but there is only so much you can handle depending on your current lucid dreaming prowess. Like everything else, with time you will be able to reach higher and higher levels.

These heightened levels of lucidity produce corresponding increases in your mental capacities. For example, if we were to theoretically label the levels of lucidity as L-1 and L-2 with higher numbers representing higher levels of lucidity, L-5 would then have much greater intensity than any lower levels. By intensity I am referring to the "Oh, Wow!" feeling you will experience. Also, heightened levels have more intensified clarity. Your perception, your thoughts and your feelings are crisp and clear almost as if you just put on a new set of mental glasses that has a better prescription than the ones you were wearing. At higher levels everything just seems so incredibly clear and so profoundly intense. These expanded effects are usually experienced all across the boards, visually and mentally. All your senses become progressively heightened with each increase in your lucidity level.

Extremely heightened levels of lucidity can bring about states of ecstasy and unmatched bliss. From what I have experienced of heightened lucidity, it closely resembles what Buddhists refer to as samadhi or nirvana. It is a state of pure being. Sometimes it is characterized by overflowing love and joy. It can be experienced as a complete union between yourself and your surroundings. It also closely resembles the descriptions of many saints and visionaries who have experienced ecstasy upon receiving visions. What appears to have been an experience reserved to an enlightened or "chosen" few may in fact be a repeatable experience that can be shared with everyone, or at least anyone who is willing to learn how to maintain their lucidity at heightened levels.

If you are the kind of person who disbelieves in the ability to experience something of this magnitude, change your beliefs and the experiences may follow. Also, if you are the kind of person who thinks all that "overwhelming love stuff" is for the Hippies or New Agers, I highly recommend giving it the benefit of the doubt and testing the waters yourself. The only way you can guarantee to never experience it is to never try, and once you do get a taste, I bet that you will start rethinking your views about all that "Hippie Stuff". The most intriguing thing is that those who need to experience this the most are usually those who avoid it like the plague. Heightening your lucidity to ecstatic levels can be one of the most fulfilling and rewarding experiences of your life. The after-effects of this bliss can be felt for days if not weeks, and the memories of these moments will last a lifetime.

W.I.L.D.s (Wake-Induced Lucid Dreams)

Stephen LaBerge, the lucid dream pioneer, coined the acronym W.I.L.D. or Wake-Induced Lucid Dreams. Basically, they are lucid dreams in which you directly enter into the lucid dream from a waking state, and I couldn't imagine a more suitable name because they definitely rank as one of the WILDest experiences that you may encounter in your entire life. Instead of losing your consciousness at the onset of sleep like you normally would, you are able to carry your awareness directly into a dream. By creating a mind state that is conducive to imagery and dissociated from the physical body, the focus of your awareness gets drawn into the ever-more stimulating imagery. One moment you are lying in your bed fully aware that you are lying in your bed, and the next moment you are fully immersed in a lucid dreamscape.

Basically, the process occurs by carefully handling and manipulating your awareness. It is the transference of your awareness that defines what is "real" and what is your "reality". Once the imagery reaches a certain level of complexity, your "reality" begins to redefine itself on a "need-to-be stimulated" basis. Your awareness usually opts for the imagery because it is more interesting and more "real" at the time. The more freedom and the more creative license that it gives itself, the more "real"istic everything becomes. Eventually, this build-up of "real"ism allows you to create a completely "real" environment and then you can transfer your full awareness into the dream realm.

The phenomenon of directly entering into a dream is not really new. In fact, shamans across the world have been doing it for centuries. Sadly, these customs were viewed by modern civilizations as primitive and naive practices that had little value in their consensual reality. As mentioned, much of this knowledge was labeled as "hocus-pocus". If it couldn't be quantifiably proven, the forces of reductionism and materialism crushed it. The only way to truly know it is to actually experience it and it is not too surprising that it took people with scientific background to wake up the scientific community. Stephen LaBerge experienced lucid dreams and W.I.L.D.s. As a scientist with a Ph.D., he went about collecting data and systematically approaching the subject so it would be impossible to write the topic off as being delusional or incapable of serious scientific investigation. His efforts combined with the works of other accredited scientists caused the scientific community to open their eyes to a phenomenon that they had been overlooking for centuries.

Not surprisingly, experience is usually viewed as proof only by the experiencer. By developing my ability to induce lucid dreams from a waking state, I have proved to myself that it can be done. The challenge lies in you proving to yourself that it can be done. Don't take my word for it. Work at it. Experience it yourself and then you will know it can be done. When it comes to inducing lucid dreams

from a waking state, you will certainly have your work cut out for you. This is definitely a mastery level technique so keep in mind that you may not learn it over night. In fact, it took me almost six months of disciplined effort to achieve my first one, and when I say disciplined I really mean it. I was working day in and day out when learning to lucid dream. Even with a steady paced progress those elusive W.I.L.D.s remained at arms length. I was a proficient lucid dreamer having one or more lucid dreams a week, but I still had not achieved my first W.I.L.D.. Luckily, I kept trying to induce one and suddenly, it was all worth the wait.

One night as I was in bed ready for sleep I was doing my nightly routine of affirmations and visualization, and suddenly, my visualizations were getting extremely realistic. They became so "real" that before I even consciously intended to enter into the imagery I was already flying through it. Fully conscious and flying through a spectacularly interactive dreamscape, the only thought in my head was "Wow I did it! I finally did it!" Even though I was a seasoned lucid dreamer I became overwhelmingly excited and wound up losing my visuals and awakening. At that time I had not learned how to restore lost visuals, but I certainly knew not to get overly excited, but as you too will discover, sometimes it is a lot easier said than done. In any case, I kept working at refining my ability to induce W.I.L.D.s, and slowly but surely, I can induce them more frequently.

Upon finishing this book I cannot consistently induce a lucid dream from a waking state, but they are much more commonplace. My odds of inducing a W.I.L.D. are pretty much hit-or-miss. Even though I may have three in one week, I may go another six weeks before having another one. Surprisingly, I do have a considerable amount of unintended W.I.L.D.s. Upon lying down to bed, I will start to get tired and then almost instantaneously find myself fully conscious in some dreamscape without even going through my regular nightly routine. I jokingly attribute this to all the effort I put into pursuing them in the beginning which is now finally paying off in W.I.L.D. dividends.

It takes a lot of consistent practice and dedicated discipline. You need to keep at it in order to develop to the point where you can enter a lucid dreamscape from a waking state, let alone being able to consciously induce a W.I.L.D. on command. As mentioned about a hundred times before, everything comes in time if you keep applying yourself. I have faith that one day both you and I will be able to induce W.I.L.D.s on command as long as we both work at it diligently.

Although there may be many ways to directly enter a lucid dream from a waking state, I am really only familiar with the way that I do it. I have not found too much writing about the topic aside from Stephen LaBerge's wonderful handling of the subject in his books. I have spoken with many other lucid dreamers who seem to be in general agreement that the method I will outline seems to be the standard method that most use. It is always intriguing to discover that other lucid dreamers have developed and are using the same techniques, yet these dreamers came up with the same methods by themselves using trial and error without communicating with each other and without having any common guidelines to follow.

I found another correspondence in the wonderful online book entitled "Do O.B.E." by Don DeGracia. It deals with the author's experiences while lucid dreaming and out of body experiences. If you are interested in reading his book, you can look in one of the last sections of this manual to find information about how to get a free copy of this online book. In it Don DeGracia superbly outlines and descriptively explains the process he uses to enter into a trance-like state. When I read it I was amazed at how similar his experiences were to mine. The descriptions, the timing and the overall process were almost identical. These similarities may imply that this process might be more of a natural course of events as opposed to

some unique, one-case scenario. It also lends credence to the stories of the geographically isolated shamans who over decades developed remarkably similar rituals for accessing the infinite dream realm.

How to Induce a W.I.L.D.

The process of successfully inducing a W.I.L.D. requires a certain amount of practice. This section will cover the general process as well as many underlying concepts and tips that will play a direct role in maximizing your odds of success. To become more familiar with the procedure we will take a look at my experiences and address all the obstacles and concepts as they appear.

Upon getting ready to go to bed, I will usually relax, say some affirmations, set up my intent, and then practice seeing what forms behind my closed eyelids. As I become detached but still aware, I just watch the imagery that forms. At first it is very basic, but it will eventually get more complex. Initially, it is like a gray hazy static that flows over a black background. I can eventually begin to discern lighter areas and darker areas on the black background. The lighter shades glide around and morph into different patterns much like quickly moving amorphous clouds. Once I get to this point, colors may flash in the darkness or even random shapes or fleeting forms will appear. I am becoming less and less aware of my physical body. I am becoming more absorbed by what I am seeing. Once I begin to see quick flashes of images I know that I am getting closer to my goal.

Sometimes at the very beginning phases of the visual stage I will perceive what I refer to as "thought images". They are barely visible if visible at all. I can definitely sense them, and in a way it is similar to "seeing" them, but "seeing" is not the best term for it because they are more like phantoms. They are not as concrete as the flashing imagery although they last a little longer. For example, I could be thinking about an apple and I sense that I am looking at one, yet it does not appear visually. It is there, but it seems to be hidden amidst the grainy background. It is much like how your mind will ramble from thought to thought upon awakening and going right back to bed. You will have all these random thoughts that form spurious links and continue rambling on with other associated images. The only difference is that they are barely visible. These phantom images usually occur after the initial stages of hazy black and white cloud-like visuals. Once I begin to sense these "thought images" I know that it is only a matter of time before my visualizations will become more realistic and more complex.

After this "phantom thought form" stage, the hazy background now becomes a more evolved backdrop for lots of fleeting imagery. Your thought forms are beginning to more easily take form. Objects, trees, people's faces, animals, buildings, or other scenes begin to flash before my eyes. Once there is a notable presence of the fleeting visual images I know that I am entering into a hypnagogic state. It is good to have mental reference points so you will know how to repeat a successful journey as well as insure that your timing is consistent and well planned.

As the imagery appears it may begin to last for longer periods of time. It becomes more realistic and more life-like. You can loosely guide the imagery, but it cannot be forced. I say loosely because there is a certain amount of detachment that is required. If you try too hard you will never succeed. For example, if you begin to see imagery forming, the best way to allow it to develop is to use your peripheral vision. If you look directly at your forming imagery it will usually disappear. For some strange reason too much direct awareness placed on a forming image will cause it to dissolve or completely flash away right before your eyes.

On the same note, if you think too much about controlling the formation of the imagery it will also

disappear. You need to allow it to form and go with the flow. Just observe without disrupting like you are flipping through pictures in a scrapbook or watching quick clips from a movie. You can attempt to loosely interact with the imagery. You could intend a particular dream scene like driving down the road in a car by guiding your thoughts into creating those specific visuals, but cultivating specific imagery needs to be done with caution.

It is a fine line between incubating and forcing, and in most cases if you are too eager, too controlling or too obtrusive, the scene will simply abort itself. Sometimes it is best to just go with the flow and see where it takes you because *any* realistic imagery can get you "in" to the dream realm. Any imagery regardless of the content will work equally well as long as it is perceived as "real" enough by your awareness. This "real" imagery becomes more alluring, more stimulating and more "real" than the awareness of being experientially limited to your body that is lying in bed. Once you successfully cross over the threshold into the dream realm with your awareness intact, it will be far easier to directly affect and guide your experience as opposed to trying to force the imagery in the beginning and causing it to abort.

Once the images start becoming increasingly complex, I begin to imagine that I am moving through the images. For me, movement seems to be the key to directly entering the dreamscape. If I see a house I will loosely attempt to move my awareness towards the house. Adding motion to the images begins to add a three-dimensional quality that a stationary image lacks. I envision the object as coming towards me so that my perspective is that of going through the imagery. After a while, I will usually start getting pretty realistic, moving imagery. This flowing of visuals can give me a pseudo-sense of being in the imagery. This is getting very close to being "in it" but I am still trying to *really get in* because it is still purely visual and only slightly interactive. The visuals are somewhat responsive to my thoughts because I seem to be moving through the imagery. I can chase and follow something with my transferring awareness, but I'm not completely immersed in a fully interactive dream. The transfer is not entirely complete because I cannot touch anything or move any objects with my hands while realistically "feeling" it at the same time.

If I can sustain this free flow of moving images while actively transporting my awareness through the flow, eventually it will come to a point where a threshold is crossed. At this point, I am no longer the "me" lying in bed who is visualizing these things. I am now the "me" who is running or walking or flying through these newly "real"ized images. I am aware that my physical body must be asleep in my bed, but only in a fleeting "that's not so important" kind of way. The focal point of my awareness is far more conscious of having just crossed over "into" the imagery. My awareness has now completely transferred into my new surroundings. I can now interact in this fully three-dimensional dreamscape. I am now completely "in it". If I were to walk up to the dream house I could open the door and feel the texture of the doorknob. The surroundings are completely stable and I can stop moving now and figure out what my plan of action will be.

This is a good time to re-lucidify and get grounded in your lucidity, and it is the perfect time to calm yourself down before you get overwhelmed and blow out all your visuals. Believe me, the last thing you want to do is get overly excited and then have to try to reenter again because it is not that easy. If you ever do lose your visuals, don't wake up and don't think abut your physical body. You should hold your awareness on the fact that you are still dreaming. The best salvage method would be to use the techniques you learned to restore your visuals from Limbo-Land because this approach is a thousand times easier than trying to induce another W.I.L.D.

The hardest part of the process is the actual transition "into" the imagery, but it's not hard in a sense that it is strenuous or requires exertion. It's the exact opposite. It requires no effort at all just a mildly detached intent. As mentioned this kind of detached awareness is a crucial part of the induction process especially when attempting direct entry from a waking state. Another obstacle to overcome is not falling completely asleep in the process. It just takes discipline, determination and practice. Most importantly, do not be discouraged if you do fall asleep during the process because that will happen well over ninety percent of the time. It is the few times when it does succeed that will make all the time and effort worthwhile.

Well, that is the process. Hopefully, you will get to the point where you can directly enter into a lucid dream. It is an absolutely remarkable experience. For me, I will have consciously-willed WILDs sporadically, and they usually happen either right when I go to bed at night or in the early morning using the Sleep/Wake/Back to Bed Method. I highly recommend experimenting with your hypnagogic imagery by staying up as long as possible and observing "yourself" as you fall asleep. Cultivate the imagery behind your closed eyelids and experiment with it. You can learn a lot by just watching it and loosely guiding it, and eventually, you should get to the point where you can move through it and then cross over "into" it by completely transferring your awareness. If you keep trying, one thing is certain. You are bound to have some really wild W.I.L.D.s.

Lucid Dreams or Out-of-Body Experiences? : The Endless Debate

Was my lucid dream an out of body experience? Or was my out of body experience really a lucid dream? This is an endless debate that continually rears its head in many lucid dreaming circles. By definition, an out of body experience is an experience in which you leave your physical body and are able to maintain full consciousness. While lacking a physical body you usually do possess some form of "out-of-body" body whether it is termed an astral body, your double, or your dreaming body. In some cases you can even exist as a single point of awareness, but even when your perspective is coming from one localized focal point, you are still operating without your physical body.

According to this loose definition, a lucid dream would fit into the category of an out of body experience because you have projected your awareness out of your physical body and into a conscious dream. However, even though lucid dreams fit into this category by definition that does not necessarily mean that out of body experiences are lucid dreams. It gets a little more complicated than just heaping the two experiences together because they have several subjective differences.

I have experienced both lucid dreams and out-of-body experiences and believe that they are separate but related phenomenon. It is all a matter of how you choose to view it, much like the "observer effect". I believe that the determining characteristic is how you perceive the experience at the time that it is occurring. For example, if you become lucid in a dream, you would be thinking, "Wow, I am in a lucid dream!". When you find yourself in the full-blown vibrational state associated with sleep paralysis and then you feel yourself lifting out of yourself, it's safe to conclude that you will be thinking, "WOW! I am having an out-of-body experience!". The problem is that all these experiences are not clear cut and some have overlapping qualities. Whenever anyone asks me to determine if their experience was a lucid dream or an out-of-body experience, I usually respond by asking them how they perceived it at the time.

There seems to be endless debate over what was this and what was that. Many people are so thoroughly caught up in the labeling and the semantics that they lose sight of the most important thing, the experience itself. From my experience I have concluded that they are definitely two different

experiences, but they are extremely related. I liken the differences as being similar to the differences between salmon and mackerel. They are both fish, but they also possess their own specific qualities. Now if we were to compare beef to fish there would be much more difference but still there would be many similar properties. With this in mind we could view our waking "reality" as the beef and our dreaming "reality" as the fish. The out of body experiences and the lucid dreams are just different versions of the fish. Enough with the food analogy, but hopefully that line of reasoning helps you get a better picture of how our different states of consciousness are related and interwoven, yet each state can exhibit its own subtle nuances that account for the subjective differences.

Differences between Lucid Dreams and Out-of-Body Experiences (OBEs)

The difference lies in your level of consciousness. All states of mind exist on some sort of continuum. As you increase the level of awareness and ascend to higher levels of conscious awareness you are able to experience what you would not be able to experience had you not developed a way of carrying and transferring your awareness into these different realms of experience. When you start experimenting with heightened levels of lucidity it is more than likely that you are going to eventually experience an out-of-body experience (OBE). When you do, you will have a better understanding of the subjective differences between the two.

Aside from the perception and interpretation of the experience at the time, there are some other frequently reported differences. First of all, most but not all OBEs take place in your "real" bedroom with you lifting or rolling out of your physical body and then hovering or standing in your "real" room. This can happen in lucid dreams, but is more closely associated with W.I.L.D.s than with ordinary lucid dreams, and even with W.I.L.D.s you are more likely to enter into your imagery which is not normally your room. This "real" space OBE terrain means that you are out of body in your real room and you can float or hover through your real house and out into your real neighborhood. Normally, in your lucid dreams you are already in some pre-existing dreamscape when you notice something that sparks your lucidity. Having gathered input from many experienced OBErs, there seem to be many OBEs that also occur in different spaces aside from the "real" waking world. The OBE realm is often referred to as the astral plane or the astral worlds. Considering the wide variety of cultures that share the belief of such a place, there are many different terms used to describe this place where you go when you travel out of your body. Some people even travel around while out of body with their pets or with an astral friend or guide. Given the wide range of experiences while out of body, the OBE realm is not confined to the "real" equivalent of our waking world, but from my experience I find that most OBEs do begin from my "real" room. After separating from my physical body, I usually spend some time in a convincing facsimile of what seems to be my "real" waking world.

Another subjective difference between LDs and OBEs rests in their differing levels of intensity. There is an extremely heightened level of intensity while having an OBE. It is undeniably more intense than most lucid dreams, not to imply that you cannot have extremely intense lucid dreams. In fact, I have had some exceedingly heightened moments of lucidity that were barely distinguishable from my OBEs, but in general these are not too common. One thing that seems to hold true is that an average OBE is by far more an intense than an average lucid dream. I believe it has something to do with the conscious focus upon being separated from your physical body. It can be outright spooky if you do not know what to expect, and it can be equally disorientating if you do not how to react to the situation.

Since the lifting-out process takes place in a stage that is very similar to sleep paralysis there is plenty of fear to overcome as well as the occasional sensing of another presence in the room combined with the hallucinatory visuals and sounds. It seems to be an overwhelming fear of the unknown that fuels the fire and puts you in a rather unique mindset. A huge adrenaline rush courses through your body along with an accompanying wave of vibrations that ripples intensely throughout your body. In the hundreds of lucid dreams I have had, I have rarely experienced anything so bizarrely intense as this pulsating electrical wave. This intense precursor to most OBEs can heighten your senses as well as your fears to maximum status and this usually sets the stage for an equally intense voyage once you get "out" of your physical body.

Another thing I have noticed is that the intensity levels seem to diminish the longer you are in an OBE state. In fact, I find that within a few minutes my OBE may begin to transform into a lucid dream. For example, once out-of-body I'll start hovering through my house, and for a while things will be "real" or "true" in the sense that what I am seeing is truly my house at night. The initial visuals and experience are strikingly real. They leave little question as to whether or not I am actually out-of-body, yet given time my awareness of "being out-of-body" becomes muted and more engrossed in my surroundings. As a result, the OBE slowly takes on lucid dream-like qualities. For example, I may see things that I know could not be happening. People I don't know may be in my living room at four o'clock in the morning. Maybe my kitchen has transformed into a restaurant or any other inconsistencies leads me to think that I am now in a lucid dream. I usually interpret this as a sign that dream imagery is superimposing itself onto the OBE realm, or put another way, I am no longer having a "true" projection or no longer "dreaming true".

When this happens I have two options. I can re-induce an OBE that will zap me back into my body and into a full blown vibrational state and repeat the "lift-out" process again, or I can just go with the flow of the current experience. Although there may be questions as to whether one is out-of-body or having a lucid dream, the amount of lucidity at the time is still at extremely elevated levels. I have successfully tried re-inducing OBEs when the visuals indicate that I may be in a lucid dream, but the same thing usually will happen. After I am "out" for a while the OBE will transform into a highly-lucid lucid dream. Considering the intensity of high level lucidity, it isn't such a bad thing to just maximize your time lucid by carrying out whatever goal you may have planned for the night. Instead of wasting time going through the "lift-out" induction method over and over, I usually just maximize the lucid moment and see where it takes me.

Another difference between the two is that the OBE environment in general has more stability. There is more continuity and consistency compared to the lucid dream realm. Instead of being able to mentally create a change in your OBE environment, some places you go while having an OBE seem to exist independently without the need for you to uphold them with your intent, as is the case in most lucid dreams. You seem to exist separately as an observer. You travel through the surroundings more like a person visiting some pre-existing place or some other dimension. In a lucid dream it is usually quite easy to rearrange the setting. Even though the lucid scenery can be totally stable, it isn't necessarily fixed or entirely static because your thoughts can interact with the lucid dream surroundings and alter them as well. For example, in a lucid dream you may bump into a wall, but in an OBE you would most likely pass right through the wall. Again, it is very possible to pass through walls in a lucid dream. Actually, I do it all the time, but the tendency in a lucid dream is to "intend" to go through a wall and then will yourself through the wall; however, in an OBE you simply and instinctively move right through most material object. There is usually very little resistance and very little intent is required.

In conclusion, it is safe to say that lucid dreams can be considered a mild form of OBE, but there are many subjective differences. As you heighten your levels of lucidity you begin to approach the intensity levels that characterize an OBE, but having this much intensity in a lucid dream still does not qualify it as being an OBE. The key always comes down to answering one question. There is no easier way to differentiate the experiences than simply asking yourself how you perceived it at the time. Believe me, if it was an OBE you would know it because at the time you would be thinking, "WOW! I am out of my body!"

Also, the labeling of the experience is far less important than the actual experience. What you learned and how you used this experience is what truly matters. I always recommend staying focused on maximizing the experience and learning to repeat them instead of spinning your mental wheels on some semantic quandary. It is especially important in the beginning phases to label less and experience more since the map is not the territory. Once you get some experience under your belt you will have a better frame of reference to compare all the different subjective nuances. Regardless of the terminology, lucid dreams and OBEs are both amazing gateways into fully interactive non-ordinary "realities".

Many people would prefer out of body experiences over lucid dreams. This may be due to the greater intensity and the possibility of actually traveling to a "real" place and observing what is happening there while out of body. Who wouldn't want to pop in and visit friends on the other side of the country and then call them the next day with an accurate description of their house? The problem is that this emphasis on OBEs is usually based on a need to prove something to others when all the proof should rest in your own experience.

Or even worse yet, your desire could be based on a need to stroke your ego with the attainment of some sort of supernatural powers. If this is the case then you better take a massive review of your goals and your belief systems because you are not establishing your goals on a worthy foundation. When pursuing these experiences you need to be firmly grounded in your waking "reality". You need to aim your inner growth at that sunny window in your mental living room. Without having good goals and a good structure to support you through your waking "reality", you may wind up going over the deep end and neglecting your waking affairs. These are amazingly profound experiences, but they may not necessarily be the best activity if you already have little grip on consensual reality.

Although OBEs have some major selling points I would emphasize the fact that lucid dreams can be just as rewardingly insightful and profoundly meaningful. The fact of the matter is that both experiences have wonderful benefits. The bottom line is how you use these experiences. For example, you could go out of body and float around your house while out of body, but if you did some successful problem-solving while in a lucid dream, you would be better off having the lucid dream in this case. It is the guided application of these altered states that should determine their respective worth.

Also, the following true story is a great example of how the borderlines between these two experiences are often so ambiguous that it is nearly impossible to classify it as one or the other. One night, I was in my bedroom doing my nightly induction rituals. After meditating for a while I entered into a deep trance. Before I knew it I was experiencing sleep paralysis and felt the familiar rippling waves of electrical pulses dance up and down my body. I lifted out of my body and was fully aware that I had just projected my awareness into my bedroom. While hovering in my room I decided to enter my roommate's room to see if there would be anything that I could confirm seeing the next day. I was hoping there would be something I would not normally know unless I had retrieved the information from the OBE.

In this experiment I was testing to see the "real" world while out of body so I floated into the hallway and through the door into the next room. I saw my roommate and his girlfriend sleeping in bed. They began to awaken and it was so incredibly "real" that even though I knew that I had just lifted out of my physical body I whole-heartedly believed that I must be in their real room. I truly believed that I must have been sleep walking and entered his room. Now, they were waking up and I would surely be caught standing against their bedroom wall in the middle of the night. How would I possibly be able to explain my whereabouts?

They did wake up and began to talk to me as I suddenly noticed that I was hovering several feet off the floor trying unsuccessfully to hide. Now, I'm really confused because my levels of awareness were so thoroughly heightened that I was sure that I was really in their room. I felt that I must have been having an out-of-body experience because the intensity was so pronounced and I also remembered lifting out of my physical body. However, when they spoke to me and interacted with me I concluded that it must just be an extraordinarily lucid dream, but this is just the prelude to the moral of the story.

Upon awakening in my bed I had a very vivid recollection of my adventure, as often is the case when you experience heightened lucidity or any lucidity for that matter. As I reflected on what happened, I realized that I had seen what he and his girlfriend were wearing in my dream, and there would have been no way to have known this because I was asleep before they had come home that night. He was wearing something normal like sweat pants and a T-shirt, but she was wearing something unusual. She had on a yellow sweatshirt that I had never seen her wear before in my life, let alone seeing her wear it to bed. When I remembered this I was very excited to see what she would be wearing when she woke up that next morning. I was awestruck when she appeared in our living room wearing the exact sweatshirt I had seen during my experience. It was the same color, same fabric, and the same style right down to the unique wide-toothed metal zipper at the neckline.

So was it a highly lucid dream or was it an OBE? In this case, who really cares? The point is that the labeling and the terminology really mean little when compared to the experience. I perceived it to be an extremely lucid dream at the time, yet I was able to retrieve information that turned out to be true. On other occasions while out of body I have seen things that I have later verified as being true, yet these things were also seemingly impossible for me to have known. You may or may not believe in this form of traveling clairvoyance, but I have surprisingly experienced it so I know it as fact and not fiction. I am not trying to sway your beliefs in any direction aside from opening your mind to the impossibly possible realm that you can access when you begin to expand your current levels of awareness.

Another point I always like to mention when people are heralding the superiority of OBEs is the existence of precognitive dreams. I have had several throughout my lifetime. I have had both lucid and even nonlucid dreams that have eventually come true in my waking life. In one case, I never remembered the dream until I was experiencing a similar situation in waking "reality". It happened to be a very dangerous and chaotic happening in which I narrowly escaped being physically harmed, but because of this precognitive dream I knew where to go to avoid the danger. The point is that even nonlucid dreams can hold magical insights and clues to things you may not even imagine at your current station in life so who can categorically define and compare these classifications under one broad framework? It just is not possible to neatly fit each experience into its respective label considering the massive amount of overlapping and the large amount of inherent ambiguity.

However, one thing is certain. Placing importance on expanding your awareness and finding the hidden

value in every experience will fill your waking and dreaming "realities" with an abundance of meaning and growth. By believing in your dreams and learning to make them work for you, you will have double the advantages because in your waking life you can access all that you have learned in your dreams as well as everything you have throughout your waking moments. From my experience, it seems that there is a spectrum of consciousness, with lucid dreaming and out-of-body experiences being just two similar points on that spectrum. The continuum of consciousness can only be experienced, and the experience will speak for itself so you be the judge.

I am still working on expanding my knowledge of the OBE experience, and may find that with time and more experience there may be ways to better control my OBE experience and keep it "real". But at the same time, I may be setting far too strict of guidelines for an OBE. Some OBErs travel to the past or into the future. Some experienced out-of-body travelers journey around with other astral travelers, and some travel with their dream animals just like the many shamans who "journey" into the other realms accompanied by their power animals, their other-worldly animal allies. Many accomplished out of body travelers travel in realms that are not exact replicas of our "real" waking world. All this seems to point out that I may indeed have a far too restrictive definition of an OBE.

My beliefs that an OBE should have "real" visuals could be limiting my ability to travel out of body by raising doubts at the time and creating a self-fulfilling prophesy. It gets tricky to unbind yourself from limiting beliefs when you are riding an intense crest of awareness whose waves of circumstance could flow in any direction depending on your slightest thoughts or beliefs. In other words, whenever you are immersed in the awareness of any situation you are subconsciously interpreting everything according to your thoughts, beliefs and desires. That is why it is so crucial to reflect on all your experiences especially your lucid ones to look for any correlation between certain thoughts and certain experiences. A preconception that OBE visuals need to be "real" may hold back your progress so it is important to always be reevaluating your belief systems. Being able to access information from our "real" waking world may be just one type of out of body experience just as near-death experiences may represent yet another type. In any case, I would love to be able to prolong this "real" OBE awareness so I have recently been spending more time in my lucid dreams trying to induce "real" projections.

Transforming your Lucid Dreams into Out of Body Experiences

I have recently been researching different ways to induce an out of body experience from a lucid dream, but I have already had some amazing results. Before I ever began developing my dreaming side, I had read about out of body experiences, astral projection and near death experiences, but I always thought it was just some hair-brained scheme someone had cooked up to sell books to gullible New Agers or optimistic occultists. Once I started lucid dreaming, I opened my mind and expanded my beliefs to include this experience. Not surprisingly, I have had numerous opportunities to experience firsthand that our consciousness can in fact be projected from the body.

You can use your lucid dreams as an ideal launching pad for inducing out-of-body experiences. It is rather difficult to consciously project from your body while in a waking state. In fact, for me at least it is even more difficult to have a willed OBE than it is to induce a W.I.L.D., and as we discussed these are mastery level techniques. Since there are so many similarities between lucid dreams and OBEs, it is much easier to transform your lucid dream into an OBE. I would liken the difficulty to the difference between becoming lucid while in a dream and entering a lucid dream directly from a waking state. In the latter case you will have much lower odds of success.

In your lucid dreams you are already in an altered state of consciousness, and as a result you are in a less restrictive frame of mind. It is a lucid dream. Anything is possible. If you can fly around and push your hand through walls then the idea of inducing an out-of-body experience does not seem like such a major task. Conversely, if you were to attempt an induction while you were awake, you would encounter far more limitations due to the predominance of your rational waking mindset. This fact explains why the lucid dream realm can be used as an effective springboard into the OBE realm.

I have three methods that I commonly use to transform my lucid dreams into OBEs. Try them out and see which ones work best for you. These methods involve some of the techniques that you have already learned so hopefully you'll be able to incorporate them into your next lucid dream with some surprising results. I have shared these methods with other lucid dreamers, and they have had some success with them as well. These methods should help you "out" and allow you to directly experience the difference between lucid dreams and OBEs. As mentioned with all the advanced techniques, don't get discouraged if at first you don't succeed. Since some of these methods require mastery of other techniques you may have to work on developing each rung before you can completely climb the transformational ladder.

Method One: Inducing OBEs directly from a Lucid Dream

Once I become lucid within a dream, I will examine my dreamscape to stabilize within it. As mentioned earlier if you're having an OBE and your vision is not too clear or if your surroundings are not stable, you can verbally intend it to become more clear and more stable by saying, "*Increase Clarity, Now!*" The verbal command that you need to become familiar with in order to induce an OBE is "*Increase Lucidity, Now!*" or *"Increase levels of lucidity, Now!*" After developing your ability to use this command effectively, you will only be a few steps away from directly inducing an OBE. After progressively heightening your lucidity while in your lucid dream, you will be able to verbally induce an OBE by saying, "*Induce an Out of Body Experience, Now!*". This is an extremely simplified summary of the process, and to maximize your results it may be a good idea to go over the whole process in a step-by-step fashion.

For starters, while in a lucid dream I will say "*Increase Clarity, Now!"* and this usually brings crisp resolution and increased awareness and focus. After I stabilize again, re-lucidify and become comfortable, I will then intend verbally, " *Increase levels of lucidity, Now*!" This will bring even more intensity. The colors of the background may display a myriad of hyper-surreal tones, or the background and surroundings may begin flickering or wavering. It is definitely intense!

As we discussed when dealing with heightening your levels of lucidity, it is essential to reground and become re-stabilized in the lucid dream before you intend to increase your lucidity any further. If you don't you may not be able to handle the increased lucidity, and you will either lose you visuals or just wake up immediately. Likewise after you have successfully heightened your lucidity you must re-stabilize again until you are comfortable at this higher level before trying each successive increase. I will repeat this process of increasing levels of lucidity and then re-stabilizing about three or four times until my lucidity is extremely heightened.

At this point, I will use a verbal command or even just mentally intend to have an OBE by saying or thinking, "*Find the physical body but don't get trapped into it. Prepare to have an out-of-body experience!*" After practicing this for a while, I no longer need to say the whole thing anymore, but it helped in the beginning. Now, I can just get to a sufficiently heightened level of lucidity and just verbally say "IT'S TIME FOR AN OBE!" I can even bypass the verbal command method and simply intend to

induce an OBE, and this sets the whole OBE process into motion.

If successful at this point, I will be more conscious of my actual physical body lying in bed which beforehand I was not really conscious of at all. Beforehand I was more in tune with my dreaming body if any body at all, whereas now, I am totally conscious of my physical body, yet still in an altered state of mind. It is like the interim phase between a series of lucid dreams where there are no visuals. You are conscious that you are dreaming and of your body lying in bed but you just wait it out until some visuals start to form into a new dreamscape. In this case, you are waiting for your dream awareness to become loosely centered on your physical body that is lying in bed.

What you want to do is enter into the sleep paralysis stage without awakening the body. It is a delicate matter though because if you are not loosely detached you may find that you are too focused on your physical body. This may draw too much attention to the physical and result in a full transference of your awareness into your physical body. Having a full transference at this point usually ends the whole attempt by awakening you and removing you from your altered state. You want to juggle your awareness and allow it to remain in its lucid altered state without fumbling it into your physical body and becoming too grounded in the physical.

Sometimes, upon inducing your OBE you may experience what is referred to as a bilocation of awareness. A bilocation of awareness is when you are able to simultaneously maintain two separate points of awareness at the same time. You are aware that part of you is observing from some place beyond the constraints of the physical body, yet you are also conscious of feeling your body but in a strange loosely energetic way. I usually feel like most of me is present in the room but not in my physical body, and a different part of part of me is also aware that I am in my body that is lying on the bed. If I experience this bilocation, my physical body is usually in the vibrational state that we discussed when dealing with sleep paralysis. There will be a flowing mild current of electrical ripples that course up and down my body. It doesn't hurt but sometimes the vibrations can get very intense and seem hard to endure. I once had a physical therapist who was doing rehab work on my injured ankle. She ran an electrical current through it to exercise it because it would not move on its own. This is almost exactly how the vibrations feel. You may even begin to feel spooked or scared at this point, but bear with it because you are only moments away from having an out of body experience. With practice it gets a lot easier to endure the vibrational state, and it eventually becomes a very pleasurable experience.

At this point you need to fight the urge to resist the vibrations and avoid analyzing them. You need to allow them to spread and intensify. The vibrations will increase and become full-blown waves. These waves will ripple through me accompanied by a humming buzz-like "MmnMmnMmn" sound. It is almost like all of my awareness is being concentrated and contracted into one focal point that is slowly flowing up and then down my physical body on the crest of this electromagnetic wave. Once the vibrations reach this level it is time to transfer your awareness out of your body.

At this point, I will simply intend to leave my physical body. I will usually just rock my awareness back and forth until I realize that I have lifted out of my physical body. Sometimes I will just lean forward and come right out of my physical body and be standing in my room. Other times, just the thought and intent is enough, and I'll be catapulted somehow from the body into the room. Sometimes it is a lift-out, other times I roll out, and sometimes I can just stand up and get out of bed and separate from my body at the same time. Try as many different ways to get out as you can because if you ever have difficulty using one method you may want to have a few different approaches at your disposal.

After successfully intending to leave my physical body, I'll be hovering in my "real" bedroom. There may be a few minor changes in the room like slightly rearranged furniture or a few extra windows, but the sense of the experience is that it is your exact bedroom. This "lifting out" or whatever method you use to go out-of-body is subjectively different from any lucid dreams that take place in your bedroom. You know that you were just in your body, but now you are hovering above or standing beside the bed where you were lying just moments ago. Such a profound awareness of this transition is usually absent from most lucid dreams except for the more advanced W.I.L.D.s.

Even during a W.I.L.D., you will experience this same transference of awareness, but with my W.I.L.D.s I usually enter directly into the imagery that I am visualizing so the transition usually does not occur in my bedroom. I may be visualizing a landscape with houses, and then once I crossover, I will be standing or flying in this landscape. In fact, it will now be a fully interactive dreamscape. In the cases where my W.I.L.D.s occur in my bedroom, they are very similar to out of body experiences although they usually lack the initial vibrational stage.

Method Two: Heightening Lucidity to Induce an Out-Of-Body Experience

I have been doing a lot of experimenting with heightened lucidity. We have already covered the concept of deliberately increasing the levels of your lucidity while in a lucid dream. By verbally intending to increase your lucidity, grounding or stabilizing at the heightened level, and then increasing lucidity again, you can successively induce higher and higher levels of awareness. Once you get comfortable using this method within your lucid dreams you will be able to handle higher levels without become overly excited, mentally scattered, or even destabilized. You then will be able to get to a point where you are so highly lucid that it is indistinguishable from the state of awareness one has while having an OBE. That is the basis of this method. You just keep increasing your lucidity and eventually you will become so intensely lucid that the dream begins to transform into an OBE. Once I hit this heightened level the whole nature of the dream transforms and becomes indescribably intense. The clarity and intensity of the experience becomes so immense that the lucid dream will take on OBE-like qualities.

Sometimes I'll be in a lucid dream and accidentally induce an OBE by increasing my lucidity too rapidly. Not that this is necessarily a bad thing, but it can be startling when it happens unintentionally. I may be running a routine increase of lucidity, and suddenly I will have a bilocation of my awareness. I will have simultaneous awareness that my physical body is in a full-blown vibrational state yet my dreaming body is still fully conscious and capable of maintaining the current dreamscape. Normally, it is very rare to have full-blown vibrations while in a lucid dream. This coincidence not so coincidentally shows that the method of progressive heightening of lucidity can result in a more OBE-like experience.

Many times when I intentionally heighten my lucidity to higher levels, I will find that my attention will become more focused on the fact that this experience is much more than just a dream albeit a lucid one. The awareness of being in a lucid dream begins to shift into an awareness that this is not *just* a lucid dream. These are the perceptual crossroads as you subjectively tread the borderlines between a lucid and an out of body awareness. It then becomes a matter of how you are going to direct the experience. Is it an out-of-body experience? Or is it an extremely lucid dream? Whatever way you choose to view it will affect the outcome of your experience. If you perceive yourself as being out of body then you will be setting the stage for an OBE-like experience. If you view it as a highly lucid dream this interpretation will most likely result in an experience that fits into your parameters of a highly lucid dream.

The question then arises, if our interpretation of these experiences influences the actual experience, can

we use this principle to directly alter our experience by consciously changing our view of the situation? In other words, if I am in a lucid dream could I change it into an OBE simply by thinking that I am having an OBE? These questions led me to begin consciously altering my perception in a lucid dream, and this leads us to our next method.

Method Three:

Altering your Perception in a Lucid Dream to Induce an Out of Body Experience

The more I examined the perceived differences between lucid dreams and out of body experiences, the more I came to one realization. The most important difference between them is how you view and experience them at the time. Based on this subjective difference I decided to modify my thinking while in a lucid dream, once I become lucid and have stabilized my lucidity in the dreamscape, I will think "Wow! I am out-of-body! I'm having an OBE!" instead of thinking "Wow! I am dreaming!" The results are incredible and lead me to believe that your experience is definitely what YOU make it. Your experience is based largely on how you view it and perceive it at the time, and these views can be changed to change the whole experience.

When I alter my view of the situation and decide to perceive the experience as an out of body experience I find that my experience immediately takes on OBE-like qualities. Intensity levels and overall lucidity increases without even having to go through the process of intending increased lucidity. By simply thinking that you are out of body leads to situation where your subconscious begins to create an experience that corresponds to your preconceptions. Your thoughts, beliefs, and your intent directly and indirectly create and maintain your experience in the dream realm and the OBE realm, if in fact the two realms are different. By consciously altering the way you are viewing and interpreting your experiences you bypass the normal checks and balances of your belief systems. Choosing to view your lucid dreams as OBEs is much like hitting a warp-speed button that manifests an experience to match your new perspective.

The results so far seem very promising. It has shown me that your outlook on any given situation like the "observer effect" can drastically affect the situation itself, for better or for worse depending on what view you choose. This is definitely an advanced technique that assumes you already have a certain amount of control in the lucid dream realm. If you have trouble maintaining a normal lucid dream, you may need to develop your ability to sustain and prolong your lucidity as well as your ability to handle heightened levels of lucidity before attempting to transform them into OBE-like experiences. However, the underlying principle behind this method can be used to maximize your lucid dreaming experiences and your waking experiences as well. Change the way you choose to perceive it, and not surprisingly, the whole experience will change accordingly.

These three methods are great ways to transform your lucid dreams into out of body experiences. Even if you fail to induce an OBE, you may still find many surprising perceptual twists when you experiment with these methods. Keep trying them and testing them, and you may find an accessible gateway into an intensely altered state of mind.

XI. WAKING WORLD APPLICATIONS

By being aware of how your dreams are influenced by your daily thoughts and affairs, you can expand your awareness of your waking life. You may discover that whenever you dream about certain people you have chaotic dreams. This type of dream pattern should be an indicator of how you feel about that person. If this person is someone you care about, you should search for the source of this pattern. If you ask yourself honestly, you may find that you are harboring negative thoughts about that person which need to be resolved. Looking at the patterns of your dreams and examining the recurrence of certain dream themes will tell you a lot about yourself. Each dream and especially each dream theme is a snapshot of you at that point in time. Since your dreams are a reflection of you, there are endless opportunities to learn more about yourself.

These reflections like dream bubbles will pop your awareness into awakening to the here and now. You will become trained to dream and since no one wants to have bad dreams, you will learn to have great dreams, but there is a catch. In order to consistently have great dreams you must first have your own backing of positive thoughts to serve as the paint on your mental canvas. So to dream well, you must think well. The two go hand in hand, and the better you get at dreaming the more you will see the correlation. You will directly experience the delightful realms you can create with your mind, but unfortunately you will also be the one to endure your thoughts when they go astray in the dark corners of your dream realm. It is much like an exercise in mental biofeedback with your thoughts and beliefs directly creating your experience.

Dreams are reflections of you, and reflecting on these reflections is the ultimate way for you to see your true reflection. If that wasn't confusing enough, imagine being conscious in a dream and capable of being able to reflect on your reflection while in the reflection. I will stop that line of reasoning for a moment while I reflect. What I have seen and experienced in my lucid dreams is enough to fill many books, but the experience as a whole has a far greater scope. It is truly what you make it out to be, and the same holds true for your waking life. The more you learn about yourself, the more you will be able to expand your waking awareness by weeding out any unwanted thoughtforms and outdated beliefs.

Lucid Waking

Becoming more aware and more awake during your daily life could be one of the greatest byproducts of lucid dreaming. Cultivating the rush and intensity of lucidity during your waking moments is an excellent way to get more out of life. How often do you drive from one place to the another and upon arriving you don't remember any part of your trip? You may have spaced out and experienced lost time. You may have been daydreaming with no recall. The point is that moments like these are perfect examples of nonlucid waking. The amazing rush of lucidity in your lucid dreams holds excitement, wonder and euphoria, and it is this awakened feeling of crisp, clean awareness that needs to be mirrored in your waking life. It will "wake you up" to the amazing wonder that surrounds you everyday. Lucid waking could be considered one of the utmost stages in the evolution of you. To help illustrate this better I will outline a daily meditation I use to cultivate this waking lucidity.

Meditation to Cultivate "Waking Lucidity"

Find a place where you will not be disturbed. Lie down or sit in a comfortable chair and then relax. Imagine the feeling when you become lucid in a dream, and how you think, "Wow, I'm lucid! How amazing! I'm dreaming yet I am fully conscious!" Re-experience the feeling of euphoria and the rush of liveliness that you have felt. If you have yet to experience a lucid dream just imagine how wonderful you

think it will be. Summon this lucid feeling of "aliveness" until it becomes overwhelming. It is absolutely amazing, yet how often do we have experiences like these during our waking life? These moments of being profoundly moved are rare unless we begin to cultivate them. To duplicate this feeling in waking reality I will take time every day to think, "Wow! I am alive! How amazing! I am alive and fully conscious!"

Upon contemplating this often overlooked mystery of all mysteries, I am overcome by waves of gratitude and love for everything around me. I allow these wonderful feelings to spread throughout my consciousness and permeate every thought and belief with the appreciated magic and sheer awe of existence. What could be more incredible than the fact that we exist at all, yet the thrill of being alive is often not experienced because we often take our existence for granted. To solve this lulling into nonlucidity you should remind yourself daily to the take time to appreciate your existence and the abundant nature of the universe that supports you. The world becomes a magical place merely by viewing it as such.

Now honestly, ask yourself, when was the last time you felt elated just by the fact that you actually exist. It is the simple things like this that we take for granted and in so doing we begin to remove ourselves from the magic of our waking world. Everything is classified, labeled and sorted by name or plopped into a genus, phylum and species until all that remains is a deadened world of passive objects that we mistakenly think we know. The moment of exhilaration takes place when you can restore the sense of magic into your daily life, and that magic is always accessible to you. All you need to do is learn to shift your awareness into a lucid waking state of mind.

Synchronicity

Just as normal dreams need to be transformed into lucid ones to maximize your experience, most waking "realities" lack the lucidity and lack the magic that we once possessed as children before we were desensitized and socialized into our current consensual worldview. It is your responsibility to bring back the enchantment into your daily life. It is usually as easy as opening your eyes and looking around you. As you begin to view the world differently, you will start to realize that it is much more like a dream than you may have originally supposed. The phone rings and it is the person you were just thinking about moments prior to the call. You may dream of people and then see them on the following day. I am sure that this has happened to you, but it gets to the point where these synchronistic happenings are taking place so frequently that there is no other way to explain away all these "coincidences". It has to be a matter of being more aware, more receptive and more capable to manifest your thoughts in waking "reality".

Synchronicities have become such a daily occurrence to me that I am no longer surprised by coincidental happenings that others would find remarkable or even unbelievable. Although I am not surprised I now feel a deeper sense of awe and appreciation when I see yet another synchronicity placed in my path. There are no coincidences. There are only connections. The difficulty lies in the ability to see how everything is interrelating. As you place more faith in your ability to manifest your own reality, you will find that you are playing an active role in creating the situations that surround you. For better or for worse, you play an integral role in the creation of your waking reality just as you play the pivotal role in creating your dreaming reality.

It is the difference between having a day where everything goes wrong compared to some days when you are "on" and everything always falls marvelously into place. You may become so in tune with yourself

that you also become attuned to others as well. This enhances your relationships with everyone around you. Your faith in yourself will increase and this acts as a catalyst to draw more magically lucid experiences to you. Your limitations and frustrations will fade into the background when you become more aware of your perceptual ability to influence your "reality" by shifting your awareness.

With practice you will find that the miraculous is no longer so out of reach. This does not diminish or take anything away from that which was once miraculous instead it leaves you with the realization that miracles are a daily part of life for those who believe. The problem is that not many people are looking in the right places for their miracles. They look all around when they can find many miracles are closer than their own skin. It is all a matter of opening up your mind to new experiences and heightening the levels of your daily waking awareness, and you will begin to see the wonder that surrounds you.

Non-Patterning

One way to exercise your awareness is to become aware of any habits or patterns that you are following in your daily life. Examine your daily or weekly routines. The idea is to change routines in order to decrease the odds of nonlucid waking. The author, Carlos Castaneda, refers to this practice in the chronicles of his apprenticeship to a Yaqui "man of knowledge", Don Juan. He termed the practice "non-patterning", and it is an extremely effective way of developing your awareness. If you always follow the same route to work take a different street on your next trip. Changes such as these prevent you from falling victim to repetitive, non-thinking behavior. By following routines and habits we are using less of our awareness during our daily life. Because humans are predominantly creatures of habit, by focusing your awareness on your habits and attempting to break these patterns, you can break out of any stagnant or outdated habits.

The goal is to reprogram yourself so that you are less likely to act like an automaton. By loosening the grips that behavioral patterns have on you, you are that more likely to be grounded in the here and now. It can also help remove mental barriers that may prevent you from living a more lucid life in both waking and dreaming realms. The process not only includes changing your routines but it requires you to continually modify them. This continuous rearranging is necessary because you may just convert all your habits into slightly modified ones. For example, if you change your route to work and then continue to follow that route. This new route is now your new pattern, and it must now be modified. The point is to always be rearranging and taking new approaches. Non-patterning is a means of shaking things up and continually keeping you on your toes. This freshness of mind can prevent the stagnation that occurs when you fall into any limiting nonlucid routines.

Non-patterning can be applied not only to what you "do" , but also to what you are not doing. For example, if you rarely ever read a book, read one. If you hate jazz or opera, listen to it anyway. The possibilities are as endless as they are potentially ridiculous. Walk backwards. Smoke an unlit cigarette. Drink an empty cup of water. Wear your clothes inside out. Have breakfast at dinnertime. All these seemingly silly acts will reinforce the fact that you are the one who decides your actions. You are the one who creates your "reality". At first, you may not feel comfortable changing your patterns and doing seemingly inane actions, but given time you will be forging a new you that is more capable of independent thought and action. You will be breaking perceptual barriers and learning to transcend the shackles of your belief systems. You will be opening the doors to new growth and new ways of perceiving and acting as opposed to following the norm as most others inevitably do.

The Practice of Self-Observation

Another way to heighten your daily awareness is called self-remembering or self-observation. It is basically "being aware" that you are aware. You should become grounded and centered into how your body is feeling, how your mind is thinking, and how you are feeling emotionally at any given moment. You may think that this is how you operate throughout your day, but if you take a closer look I'll bet that you are far less lucid during your day than you would like to believe. The trick is to pretend that there is an extra "you" that is silently observing you as you go through you day. This self-observing "you" is neither judgmental nor critical. It is not a voice in your head that you converse with throughout the day. It is merely a detached and objective bystander that watches and hears all you that you think, feel and do. It is slightly like having two simultaneous awarenesses. One part is aware of, reacting to and immersed in your daily world, and the other is a separate entity that monitors the first. The "observing you" simply remains focused on being aware that you are aware.

Maintaining "self-observation" mode for extended periods of time is extremely difficult to say the least. As an exercise, you should try to become aware right now of your awareness. Realize that you are going into observer mode and will merely be a passive guest in your head. Try to sustain that "self-observation" mode for as long as you can without losing it. You would be in the lucky minority if you can succeed at maintaining this awareness for more than a few minutes without losing it and having to re-install this "self-observer" into your mental background. Try it right now and then imagine the strength of awareness needs to sustain this "observer" mode for just one hour, let alone all day and night.

I have read about "self-observation" in a few books about The Fourth Way, a movement founded by Gurdjieff and elaborated upon by Oespenski. They refer to this practice as "self-remembering" and the process is very similar to the one I have just outlined. Gurdjieff was known to have been able to use this method to directly enter into his dreams while remaining fully conscious. He would begin "self-remembering" and then observe himself as he fell asleep. He would let his body fall asleep and keep his mind fully awake. This is an excellent way to practice having W.I.L.D.s because it incorporates the need for a detached awareness. If you are simply viewing yourself and remaining aware that you are aware, you have less attachment to what may or may not be happening. You are just a passive observer who is sustaining itself along for the ride.

This practice is very tricky, but fun because it points out how important and difficult it is to have a finely honed yet detached awareness. The funny part is that usually before you even realize it you have already forgotten to be in "observer mode", and you are actively engaged in your normal state of random mental wanderings. Try to remain aware and observing of yourself as if you were your own guide or guardian helper. Try this exercise throughout your day and try to progressively lengthen the amount of time that you can sustain your self-aware awareness. Just as you should be performing your "reality check" to increase the odds of becoming lucid during the night, try to do this exercise regularly to strengthen your ability to control your awareness.

The Tibetan monks considered such sustained awareness as the ultimate level of consciousness. They taught the ability to remain fully conscious and fully aware while one was awake, sleeping, dreaming, and any stages in between them. The point is that our awareness is so easily sidetracked that any exercise that promotes a sustained awareness will have direct benefits in both waking and dreaming "realities". It will also prepare us for what we will encounter in the afterlife.

The practice of sustaining this separate awareness has many other added bonuses. It will directly increase your focus levels and concentration skills. This will create a stronger waking awareness. This energized

awareness carries over into your dreams and increases your odds of realizing that you are dreaming. You will also be able to maintain and prolong your lucidity more easily while in a lucid dream with a strengthened awareness. The practice of "self-observation" also adds endless opportunities to explore and enhance your relationship to the world around you. You can examine how you react to waking world, and apply this introspection to better yourself. You can discover insights about the innerworkings of your belief systems. The more attuned you are to yourself, the better equipped you are to handle any given situation. Once again, that lovely phrase, "Know Thyself!" rings loud and true.

Using Death as your Ally

One profound way to catapult yourself into lucid waking is to use death as your ally. This was another concept outlined in Carlos Castaneda's books. The process is simple. By addressing our mortality and "waking up" to the fact that our time on this earth is limited, we can truly be alive. In the face of death all trivialities fall to the wayside. Becoming allied with your death makes every moment count. He tells no lies and puts the proper perspective on living. He reveals that there are no ordinary moments, and it should not take the death of a loved one to force you into facing this ever-present companion and guide. He makes life crisp and real and mysterious. Your life becomes exquisitely valuable and increasingly worthwhile. Truly embracing death in this way acts as a catalyst to propel you into lucid waking as it brings true progress towards true goals.

Without death there can be no life, but sadly along the way, death has been stigmatized and vilified into this evil being with a black robe and a sickle, the grim reaper. In my experience he is more like the wisest of teachers. He picks you up when you have fallen into self-groveling or self-importance issues. He keeps you focused and he keeps you on the path. Every death and every birth is merely a transition. Every birth is a death from the previous stage, but every death is a birth into the next phase. You may not have the comfort of knowing exactly what awaits you in this next stage, but by using death as your ally not your enemy, you can rest assured that the most meaningful moment is right here, right now. All you need to do is open your eyes.

I always give thanks for this lesson, and I hope that my wording has done justice to the remarkable essence of this experience. It is often so difficult to capture in words something so emotionally charged and profoundly moving without losing some of the wonder along the way. The point is to stretch and strengthen your awareness through lucid dreaming so that you are able to be more awake and more aware during your waking hours. By using death as your ally you begin to tread the lucid waking path. Learn to be fully alive every day as if it were the most sacred and mysterious gift because it is!

The following exercise is a meditation that I use to "wake up" my awareness. It is a very effective way of reprioritizing your waking consciousness and resurrecting the enchantment of daily life. Whenever I am becoming too self-absorbed, apathetic or overwhelmed, I will use this exercise to snap me back into a lucid waking frame of mind. Even if I am feeling great, it still can be used to elevate my level of awareness and maximize my overall wellbeing.

Meditation upon Death as your Ally

Address the fact that one-day you will die. Your death is inevitable but today you are alive. This very moment you are filled with life! Meditate on how lucky and grateful you are to be alive, right now. Imagine if you were to die tomorrow how should you feel today, and what should you do today. Decide who needs to be talked to before you leave this plane of existence. There is so much love in you to give

to others and so much gratitude that you would love to share before you have to go. So many loved ones, so many treasured times, so sad that it may end tomorrow, but what matters is that you are alive today!

Combining these thoughts and feelings with the awareness that your time is limited really drives and roots you into the moment. An intense yearning to share your life with others and to communicate your gratitude to all of those who have graced your life with their presence begins to envelope your entire being. You want to share this love and share this feeling with everyone who will listen. Tears of gracious gratitude and joyous liveliness may flow freely until you are washed over with the certainty that being alive right here, right now is the most precious gift you could ever have.

At this point, you realize that there is a part of you that is now listening to you. This part of you is your Higher Self, or whatever term you chose to describe the larger more enduring part of yourself. It wants to let you know that you are not alone and that you have its support and assistance. It will help you through this world as it will through the next and any in between them. This presence appreciates and accepts your gratitude and seems as loving, grateful, and happy as you are. It is proud that you are feeling this realization. As an ever present but often overlooked companion, this presence shares in your experience with you. It gives you the strength to maintain this heightened state of awareness throughout your day as you spread this contagious love and appreciation with everyone around you. The world now becomes a magical place again, a place to be revered with awe and appreciation. Now, it is just a matter of sustaining that feeling. Whenever you feel in need of rejuvenation you can repeat the exercise to refocus your awareness upon what it means to be truly alive.

The feelings evoked from this exercise are very similar to the overwhelming emotions experienced in an ecstatically heightened lucid dream. At first, you may have to work a little bit at recreating this "alive" feeling since it is such a rarely experienced state of mind. With practice, you can summon this awe, gratitude and euphoria on command. By repeatedly sustaining this wave of elation you become more comfortable with its intensity and more able to recreate it and even improve upon it. Sadly, these moments of glory and interconnectedness do not usually occur on a daily basis. To put it into perspective, think back to the last few times that you have felt this wonder-FULL affection. I would bet that it has been far too long which leads to the following question.

Why the need to look so far in the past for something that ideally you should be experiencing at every moment? There should be more incredible experiences like this in your life, but as with all the other concepts we have covered, the answer rests in you "waking up" and creating a better "reality" for yourself. You need to actively engage your awareness to correct this problem. Seize the moment by seizing your awareness and guiding it to grander horizons. Just as lucid dreaming can maximize your time in the dream realm, lucid waking can transform your normal nonlucid moments into magically rewarding ones.

XII. SUPPORT GROUPS and OTHER RESOURCES

The Internet

The Internet is an excellent tool for the aspiring lucid dreamer. There are numerous websites on the Internet where you can gather information about lucid dreaming. There are many message boards, newsgroups and even mailing lists where you can post questions and have them answered by fellow dreamers. In the last few years I have seen a dramatic increase in the number of lucid dream-related

websites. This could be due to the fact that more and more people are entering into the worldwide web community, or it could be due to an increasing awareness and interest in lucid dreaming. In either case, the Internet can be a great source of free reading and a great resource for receiving help and finding support for your lucid dreaming endeavors.

To find information about lucid dreaming on the Internet, simply type "lucid dreaming" as a keyword into your favorite search engine, and you should find listings of many related websites. For those who are interested in using the Internet but are not quite as computer savvy or are borderline computer illiterate, don't worry. The next paragraph will cover step-by-step instructions on how to find the information that you need. If you already have experience with the Internet, you may want to skip this next section and move on to the information about my website.

Internet Instructions for Beginners

For those who have no idea what a search engine is or haven't the faintest clue what a keyword is, this section is for you. First, you need to have access to the Internet. If you do not know how to sign on and get connected you should find someone who can walk you through it. After that it is pretty simple. After you have signed on to your Internet Service Provider whether it is America Online, Compuserve, Earthlink or whatever, just look for the little box on your screen that has "GO" or "FIND" written next to it. This is basically your new navigational center. By typing an Internet address into this box and clicking "GO' or "FIND", you will be directly connected to that website.

There is a list of Internet addresses in one of the next sections. They usually begin with "http://www." and have an ending of ".com", ".net" or ".org". They look something like this: http://www.wherever.com. You just type these addresses directly into this box and click "GO". It is as simple as that. If you want to search for other sites you need to use a search engine. A search engine is a website that helps you find Internet addresses to other websites like an electronic Yellow Pages™ . There will be a box on every search engine where you enter keywords for what you are interested in finding. In our case, you will enter "lucid dreaming" and then click on the "GO" or "FIND" button. This will activate the search engine to begin a search to find any websites that match the keyword(s) you have entered. After the search is completed you will see a list of matching websites. Now, all you need to do is click on the link to whatever site you would like to visit and you will be instantly connected. The links are normally underlined and written in blue text.

If you have reservations about using the Internet, I strongly suggest that you put aside any of your unfounded fears and try it out anyway. The most difficult part is actually getting started and not falling victim to procrastination much like with any other endeavor. Just go online and follow the step-by-step instructions above and you should have no trouble finding your way through cyberspace. Once you start surfing around on the web, you will find it is one of the greatest resources for finding information on any subject, not just lucid dreaming.

My Website

I have spent a good deal of time creating a website devoted to lucid dreaming, out-of-body experiences and other awareness-expanding topics.

The address to my website, **Bird's Lucid Dreaming Website**, is

http://members.aol.com/vandekeere/life1

or http://how.to/luciddream

It contains a vast amount of information as well as links to other insightful websites. There is one page that has a very large compilation of links to a wide variety of free online resources. You can download free online books, articles and programs related to lucid dreaming as well as browse through several archives of reading material. This always comes in handy when you are looking for something to read but do not feel like traveling to your local bookstore.

If you are interested in experimenting with the CoolEdit™ software that we discussed when dealing with brainwave entrainment, you can download the software for free on my site and follow the step-by-step instructions to create your own binaural beat frequencies. You can even download and sample some sound files that I have made using the program.

There is also a link to my Lucid Dreaming and Out of Body Experience message board where you can have your questions answered by myself and other fellow dreamers or make comments on any of the existing posts. This kind of communication and support can dramatically help your progress. Having a helpful community of lucid dreamers at your fingertips allows you to get specialized advice that may be impossible to find at your local bookstore. Also, it is comforting to know that there are hundreds if not thousands of lucid dreamers in cyberspace who are more than willing to help whenever you are in need. Currently, there has been a focus on the research end of lucid dreaming. I am putting together a new project called **The dREaM Initiative**. We are conducting dream research, organizing projects and testing out different dreaming techniques. We document our experiences, give feedback and share our progress with the group as a whole and the Internet community at large in an attempt to shed some light on the fascinating field of dreaming.

By joining you will have full access to the project's experiments, the info vaultzzz, mailing list, chatroom, live talk room with live streaming audio, polls, and other random eGroup & dREaM Initiative resources.

We are currently focused upon researching our natural abilities to lucid dream and to experience "out of body experiences". We also have been testing the relationship between our brainwaves and their corresponding "states of consciousness". These are largely uncharted regions and it helps to have the support of others and the advice of those that are experienced as well as the freshness of newcomers to the field.

The **dREaM Initiative** is an ideal place for people of all dream-skill levels. From beginners to advanced lucid dreamers, we can act as a group trying to further the overall body of knowledge that is currently available about lucid dreaming/OBEs.

For more info about **The dREaM Initiative**, please check out our website at:
http://members.xoom.com/thedreamison/research.html

Or http://come.to/dreamresearch

The dream is on.....

and you are personally invited to join in our explorations into these fascinating realmzzz of the mind.

If you ever have any specific questions, you can always e-mail me at vandekeere@mediaone.net. At the bottom of the main page on my site there is a link where you can directly send me an e-mail. I try to answer them as time provides, but please do not ask questions that blatantly point out the fact that you have not taken the time to read the information contained on the site.

Other Websites

On my website, there are links to the following websites as well as few other sites that are not listed here. For a preview of some of my favorite lucid dreaming sites, you can browse through the following list. These are some of the better lucid dreaming websites that I have found (listed in no particular order).

The Lucidity Institute

http://www.lucidity.com

The Lucidity Institute is an impressive facility devoted entirely to the lucid dreaming research. One of its co-founders is Stephen LaBerge, the lucid dreaming pioneer. Their website is a great resource for information on lucid dreaming. They have an archive of articles and also offer a variety of lucid dreaming products that may be of interest to you. One of the more notable products they offer is The NovaDreamer, the lucid dream inducing sleep mask. Their newsletter, the NightLight, is not only great reading but also contains lucid dreaming experiments that you can participate in from the privacy of your own home. Be sure to check out this website because it is loaded with useful information.

The Lucid Dreamer's Resource Guide

http://www.cris.com/~Mbreck/ldsites.htm

The Lucid Dreamer's Resource Guide (LDRG) has links to several other informative lucid dreaming websites. Be sure to check out their main page and peruse the frequently updated information.

Lucid Dreaming (DreamMaker's Lucid Dreaming Web Production)

http://www.metro.net/anvil/lucid.html

This site, formerly The Ultimate Guide to Lucid Dreaming, has lots of information including links, a chat room, and a message board.

The Ultimate Guide to Lucid Dreaming

http://come.to/lucid

This award-winning site is also very extensive. Lots of information, links, and great graphics make this site mind-expanding and offer some good "eye candy" at the same time.

SpiritWeb

http://www.spiritweb.org/Spirit/lucid-dreaming.html

This mammoth site is literally jam-packed with useful information and great links. It has a massive archive of articles, papers and treatises on various themes including lucid dreaming, out of body experiences, and many other interesting topics. You can become a SpiritWeb member for free and subscribe to any one of their many mailing lists.

Astral Projection Home Page

http://www.tanega.com/astral/astral.html

Although this site focuses on astral projection, it contains a vast amount of pertinent information. Lots of great articles, advice and a few wonderful motion-simulators put this site a few notches above the rest.

The Monroe Institute

http://www.monroe-inst.com

This site focuses on expanding one's consciousness through the use of the Hemi-Sync™ process. There is a lot of information about brainwave entrainment as well as access to information about The Monroe Institute, their programs and Robert Monroe, founder and famous out of- body pioneer.

Using the Newsgroups

There are a number of newsgroups that can be a wonderfully helpful whenever you have any specific questions. The newsgroups serve as ideal, high-volume message boards where you can post questions, make comments, and/or share experiences. The messages are posted to a general list and over time people will respond to existing posts and make new ones. There is usually a great comradery found in many of these newsgroups due to the fact that everyone is there to share and learn from each other. By and large, everyone is extremely willing to help each other so don't be shy. No question is too stupid or too elementary to be posted. You will probably be surprised by the insightful responses you receive when you do post a query.

My two favorite newsgroups are **alt.dreams.lucid** and **alt.out-of-body** because they are specifically tailored to lucid dreaming and out of body experiences. There is a lot of traffic at these particular newsgroups so you have a better chance of finding help compared to posting your question on less trafficked message boards. To get connected to any newsgroups you could use a search engine and search for "newsgroups" or even type in a specific newsgroup like "alt.dreams.lucid". This should pull up

the appropriate link to where you want to go. If you have any problems connecting to these two newsgroups, you can connect to them directly from my website.

Here is a list of some other related newsgroups.

alt.dreams

alt.dreams.edgar-cayce

alt.consciousness

alt.consciousness.mysticism

alt.consciousness.near-death-exp

alt.religion.shamanism

soc.religion.shamanism

alt.paranet.metaphysics

alt.paranet.psi

alt.paranormal

Subscribing to Mailing Lists

One great way to interact with others on the Internet is to join a mailing list. Mailing lists are available for almost any interest or topic imaginable, and the beauty is that they are completely free of charge. They operate like message boards but use e-mail as the mode of posting and responding. Upon subscribing to a mailing list you will receive any e-mails posted by any members of the mailing list. Your responses and/or comments also get posted to everyone in the group. One advantage to being on a mailing list is that you can get access to some experienced dreamers that may not frequent the message boards or newsgroups. One downside is that you may wind up on a list that has too many members. In which case, you may be bombarded by e-mails. Some lists have hundreds of people on them so the amount of e-mail that you receive can get overwhelming in some cases. Before subscribing you may want to find out how many people are on the list and the average amount of e-mails received per day. Luckily, the process of subscribing and unsubscribing is rather simple so if you can easily remove yourself from the list if you choose.

If you are shy, mailing lists are a good option because many people often lurk in the background and simply read the messages without responding. You are not obligated to post any messages or responses so you can sit back and just read the topics or "threads" that you find interesting. The same holds true for the newsgroups and message boards although with the mailing lists you remove yourself from having to log onto a newsgroup or message board because you are e-mailed daily.

There are three mailing lists in particular that I recommend. I subscribe to them and find them to be highly worth the free subscription, but these are by no means the only ones out there. These just happen to be a few of my favorites.

The LucidDreaming List: luciddreaminglist@egroups.com

This is a lucid dreaming mailing list that I just recently started. There are currently only a few e-mails per day. So there is a good insight-to-noise ratio J There is a good rapport on the list as well as a good mix of both beginning and advanced level lucid dreamers.

To subscribe, send a blank e-mail to

luciddreaminglist-subscribe@egroups.com

To unsubscribe, send a message to

luciddreaminglist-unsubscribe@egroups.com.

Another way to subscribe is to visit www.egroups.com (or my website) and subscribe to the list from the website. The website method has some advantages in that you can choose how you wish to receive the messages. You can also participate in the chat room by visiting the website or participate in a LIVE talk by speaking to other group members in live streaming audio..

The Lucid-Dreaming Mailing List: lucid-dreaming@egroups.com

This list, created by Clint Thurman, is moderately sized, but definitely manageable and insightful. There are usually only a few e-mails per day. There is a good rapport on the list as well as a good mix of both beginning and advanced level lucid dreamers.

To subscribe, send a blank e-mail to

lucid-dreaming-subscribe@egroups.com

To unsubscribe, send a message to

lucid-dreaming-unsubscribe@egroups.com.

Another way to subscribe is to visit www.egroups.com and subscribe to the list from the website. The website method has some advantages in that you can choose how you wish to receive the messages. You can also participate in the chat room by visiting the website.

The InterDimensional Mailing List:

This list deals with both lucid dreaming and out-of-body experiences. It is a relatively large list, but since all of the e-mails you receive have [interdimensional] listed in the header, it is relatively easy to sort through your e-mail although recently I had to unsubscribe due to the sheer volume of emails that were coming into my emailbox, but I'm not sure if it is so busy still….

To subscribe, you need to apply for a free membership at the SpiritWeb website. The address to their site is http://www.spiritweb.org/. After filling out your free membership, just log into your account and click on the folder entitled "mailing lists". From there you can directly subscribe to the InterDimensional List or any other lists that may catch your interest..

Search Engines:

Here is a list of some common search engines.

SEARCH ENGINE INTERNET ADDRESS

Yahoo: www.yahoo.com

Altavista: www.altavista.com

Webcrawler: www.webcrawler.com

HotBot: www.hotbot.com

Excite: www.excite.com

Dogpile www.dogpile.com

MetaFind www.metafind.com

XIII. Recommended Reading:

As mentioned, the importance of reading cannot be overemphasized. By filling your mind with information about lucid dreaming you will dramatically increase the odds of having dreams that involve these concepts. Here are a number of useful and/or insightful books that I have read over the past few years. Some are more packed with insight than others so I have tried to place some minor notations next to those that I found to be particularly helpful, but don't let that overshadow what the others may have to offer.

Dream-related books:

Lucid Dreaming by Stephen LaBerge *a classic "MUST READ"

Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming *another classic "MUST READ" by LaBerge

Conscious Dreaming by Robert Moss *another definite "MUST READ":

Dreamgates by Robert Moss *also GOOD

Lucid Dreaming by Celia Green

The Lucid Dreamer by Malcolm Goodwin *GREAT

Control Your Dreams by Jayne Gachenbach

Our Dreaming Mind by VandeCastle

Creative Dreaming by Patricia Garfield (as well as any others by her)

The Dream Game by Anne Faraday

The Dreaming Universe by Fred Alan Wolfe *great scientific approach

The Sun and the Shadow by Kelzer *good personal account of LDing

Where People Fly and Water Runs Uphill by Taylor

Living Your Dreams by Gayle Delaney

Working with Dreams by Montague Ullman,M.D. and Zimmerman

Dream Studies and Telepathy by Ullman, M.D. and Stanley Krippner,Ph.D. *interesting

Memories, Dreams, Reflections by Jung

OBE-related books:

all Robert Monroe's books *all are classic "MUST READS"

Journeys Out of the Body:

Far Journeys:

Ultimate Journey:

Cosmic Journeys : My Out-Of-Body Explorations With Robert A. Monroe by McKnight

Adventures Beyond the Body by Buhlman *great: a "must read"

out of body experiences by peterson *really good

Leaving the Body by Rogo *a "must read"; lots of techniques mentioned

The Study and Practice of Astral Projection by Sylvan Muldoon

The Projection of the Astral Body by Sylvan Muldoon *oldy but a goody

Eckankar by Twitchell *semi-dogmatic but somewhat informative

Expansive thinking:

The Crack in the Cosmic Egg by Joseph Chilton Pearce *great book on paradigm shifts

Exploring the Crack in the Cosmic Egg by Joseph Chilton Pearce *more exploring :)

Mind Trek : Exploring Consciousness,

Time, and Space Through Remote Viewing by Joe McMoneagle *great book

Powers of Mind by Adam Smith *overview of many intriguing concepts

Mega-Brain by Michael Hutchinson *good intro on mind machines

The Center of the Cyclone by John C. Lilly *really great

The Scientist-A metaphysical biography by John Lilly

.....the next few are all great BOOKS by Alan Watts

.....*you really should check out his works*

This is It by Alan Watts *great

Clouds Hidden-Whereabouts Unknown by Alan Watts *I LOVED IT

Does it Matter by Alan Watts

Behold the Spirit by Alan Watts

The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Yourself by Alan Watts *a "must read"

The Way of Zen by Alan Watts

Seeds of Genius : The Early Writings of Alan Watts

The Wisdom of Insecurity by Alan Watts

Out of Your Mind by Alan Watts

Beyond Telepathy by Andreai Puharich

The Tibetan Book of the Dead by Shambala * long-winded but interesting

The Mind Race by Targ and Harary *another good RV read

Magic:Science of the Future:Psi by Goodavage *very interesting

Kevin Trudeau's Mega-Memory by Kevin Trudeau *can't remember if it was good Accelerated Learning by Colin Rose

Subtle Energy by William Collinge, Ph.D.

The Nature of Personal Reality by Jane Roberts *great book on belief systems & reality

Shamanically related:

all of Carlos Castaneda's books,

especially "The Art of Dreaming", a "must read"

*all are HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

start with the first one, "The Teachings of Don Juan" and read them ALL in order…

The Teachings of Don Juan : A Yaqui Way of Knowledge

A Separate Reality: Further Conversations With Don Juan

Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan

Tales of Power

Second Ring of Power

The Power of Silence: Further Lessons of Don Juan

The Fire from Within

The Eagle's Gift

The Art of Dreaming

The Active Side of Infinity

The Wheel of Time:

Magical Passes: The Practical Wisdom of the Shamans of Ancient Mexico

all Kenny Eagle Feather's books (good summaries of Castaneda's books) *GREAT

A Toltec Path:

Traveling with Power

Tracking Freedom

Being-In-Dreaming by Florinda Donner *GREAT

The Witch's Dream by Florinda Donner *good

The Sorcerer's Crossing by Taisha Abelar *good

The Way of the Shaman by Harner *a classic about shamanism

Urban Shaman by Sergei Kahili King

The Eagle's Quest by Fred Alan Wolfe *great

The Way of Wyrd by Bates

Sangoma by James Hall *an mind-opening personal account

Soul Retrieval by Ingerman

Medicine Woman by Lynn Andrews

Maps to Ecstasy by Gabrielle Roth

Spirirtwalker by Wesselman *great true story, I loved it

Medicineman by Wesselman *the sequel, not quite as moving but good

Science-related (but "readable" to the everyday person)

The Holographic Universe by Michael Talbot (*MY FAVORITE*...a "MUST READ")

The Tao of Physics by Fritjof Capra *compares new physics and Eastern philosophy

Stalking the Wild Pendulum by Itzhak Bentov *great

The Dancing Wu-Li Masters by Gary Zukav *dry at time but insightful

Chaos by James Gleick *great intro about the new science of CHAOS

In the Wake of Chaos by Kellert

Chaos in Wonderland by Pickover

A Brief History of Time by Stephen Hawkings *a basic classic

The Medusa and the Snail by Lewis Thomas *impressive biological findings

Lifetide by Lyall Watson

Supernature by Lyall Watson

Excursions to the Far Side of the Mind by Rheingold

Personal accounts, experiences, and approaches:

*all of Paolo Coelho's books are great.

The Alchemist a "MUST READ" *one of my favorites!

The Valkyries

The Pilgrammage

By the River Piedra I Sat down and Wept

The Fifth Mountain

Jonathan Livingston Seagull by Richard Bach

Illusions by Richard Bach (plus any other of his books too :)

Way of the Peaceful Warrior *a "must read" and

Sacred Journey of the Peaceful Warrior by Milman *both are great

Many Lives, Many Masters by Brian Weiss

Gurdjieff:Making a New World by Bennett

Tertium Organum by P.D. Oespenski

"Eating the I" by Wm. Patterson

The Prophet's Way by Hartman *quite good

Travels by Michael Crichton *good

Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll *the resemblance to LDs and OBEs is striking

The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran * GREAT

Surfing the Himilayas by Frederick Lenz

Snowboarding to Nirvana by Frederick Lenz